

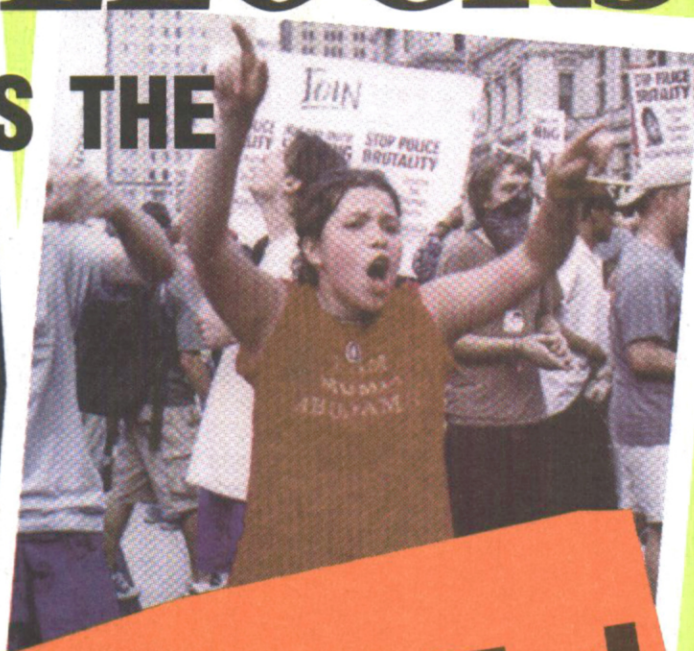
In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

September 4, 2000

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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

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In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 24, No. 20) went to press on August 4 for newsstand sales August 21 to September 4, 2000.

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Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). Call (800) 827-0270.

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Letters

Death by Moderation

I greatly appreciate Kim Phillips-Fein's thoughtful and fair-minded review of my recently published biography, *The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington*. Phillips-Fein is quite right when she writes that my book is "as much a plea for a certain kind of left politics as it is a history book." The contemporary left can learn from Mike's life and his attempt over many decades to create a "left-wing of the possible." My only quibble is with Phillips-Fein's last paragraph, in which she suggests that I retrospectively side with Mike in his debates with the New Left in an ironically "sectarian" fashion. In fact, I agree entirely with Phillips-Fein's own conclusion about the lessons of the '60s, which is to say that there were times, like the height of the Vietnam War, when Mike's "militant moderation" was "completely off the wall." Mike himself, to his great credit, repeatedly acknowledged as much in the decades that followed.

Maurice Isserman
Clinton, New York

Kim Phillips-Fein replies: *Michael Harrington may have come to the position that the correct response to the Vietnam War was outrage. However, Isserman fails to adequately address the tension between his overall support for Harrington's "left-wing of the possible" and his criticism of Harrington's actions during the war.*

Harrington's rejection of the anti-war movement reflected both his anti-Communism and his belief that maintaining good relations with the Democratic Party was of paramount importance. Harrington used "pragmatism" as a tool to attack the movement and the New Left, demonstrating his underlying hostility toward actions that seemed likely to alienate "the center."

Such knee-jerk anti-radicalism only makes "leftists" into effective conservatives, joining the right in denouncing whatever political actions seem extreme, unrealistic or insufficiently pragmatic at any given moment. But as during the Vietnam War, it is often the most radical actions that dramatically shift the political orientation of the center.

This implicit hostility toward radicalism is what troubles me about the "militant moderation" that Isserman would prescribe for the left today.

Sporting Chance

I was pleasantly surprised to find Jane Slaughter's article about women's wrestling ("Post-Feminist Smackdown," July 10). Competitive sport has gotten a bad reputa-

tion among many progressives, probably because of the way it is used for right-wing propaganda. For many of us, though, sport offers rewards that have nothing to do with delusions that the winner is "the best man/woman." It allows us to develop our talents and form communities, simply affording us pleasure. Women who have wanted to participate have too long been pushed into sports that depend on the old feminine role of display, such as gymnastics and figure skating. The movement of women into sports in which what you do, not how you look, is what matters is a good thing.

In These Times readers may be interested to know that in the 2000 Olympics another traditionally male sport will be contested by women for the first time: weightlifting. A young American, Cheryl Haworth, is a serious medal contender in the unlimited weight class.

Andrew A. Burday
Keene, New Hampshire

Out Damn ITT!

I don't want a magazine that preaches the merits of voting for Al Gore in the coming presidential election arriving in my mailbox ("Face Reality," June 12). Reading such a thing is too depressing. Please cancel my subscription.

Jon Taylor
Nashville, Tennessee

Joel Bleifuss replies: *We are sorry to lose you. A number of other subscribers have echoed your sentiments in their letters, which can be read at www.inthesetimes.com. In the past 24 years, no issue has generated a greater reader response. But if you had chosen to continue your subscription, I guarantee that you would have found opinions on this subject with which you could truly agree. "Face Reality" does convey the magazine's editorial position, but does not necessarily represent the views of all In These Times staff members, a number of whom support Nader. As for the articles in the rest of the magazine, I believe it is vital that our treatment of the Nader/Gore debate not favor one side or the other, and we will continue to publish different viewpoints throughout the campaign.*

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In These Times

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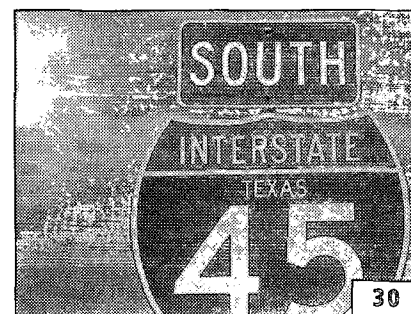
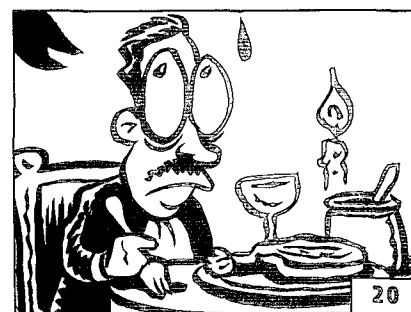
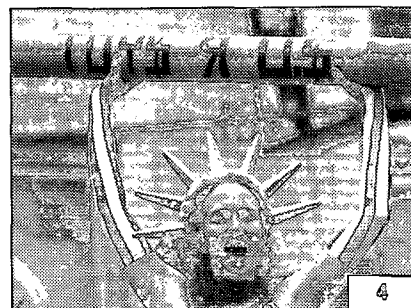
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Big Money Problems

By David Moberg

Billionaires For Bush (Or Gore)—a clever spoof launched by United for a Fair Economy at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia—concisely nailed the upshot of our campaign finance system: Big Money United Will Never Be Defeated.

The money certainly has been rolling in for the Republicans, just as one might expect of a political party devoted to eliminating the estate tax. By early August contributions totaled a record \$93 million for Bush, \$155 million to the Republican Party, and even more to all the individual and group campaign committees. "Retired," mainly a euphemism for what used to be called "the idle rich," constituted the top "industry" contributing to Republicans, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

But the story playing out two weeks later at the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles is much the same. Lawyers topped the list of industries among contributors to the Democrats (the party had raised \$113 million and Gore \$52 million at the beginning of August). But securities and investment, real estate and insurance were among the top half-dozen industries contributing to both parties. The Democrats tapped more from the entertainment and computer industries than the Republicans, but many corporations contributed equally big bucks to sponsor both conventions—including AT&T, General Motors, Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard.

There is at least one major difference between the parties: Unions were among the Democrats' major contributors, but they gave very little to Republicans. Yet unions still have accounted for only about 10 percent of the Democratic Party's money. That's one reason why the Democrats are a weak version of a working-class party—even though if Gore wins this fall, he may receive nearly one-third of his votes from union households (see "Working It," page 15).

Money distorts politics, magnifying a million-fold the agenda of the rich, at

least until the Supreme Court decision equating money and speech is overturned. It also narrows the spectrum of political choices and reduces the level of citizen participation in government. Ultimately, money's influence undermines democracy and deprives average citizens of power over their lives.

The corrupting force of money in politics is gradually gaining traction with the public, as indicated in Bill Bradley and John McCain's presidential primary campaigns, but even more so by the growing support for state initiatives for clean elections (see "Cleaning Up," page 3).

But the question of campaign finance reform was banished from the Republican Convention. The Democratic platform at least pledges support for the McCain-Feingold legislation and "publicly guaranteed TV time for debates and advocacy by candidates," but Gore's proposal to raise private funds for a "Democracy Endowment" to finance elections is a wimpy and pointless alternative to public financing.

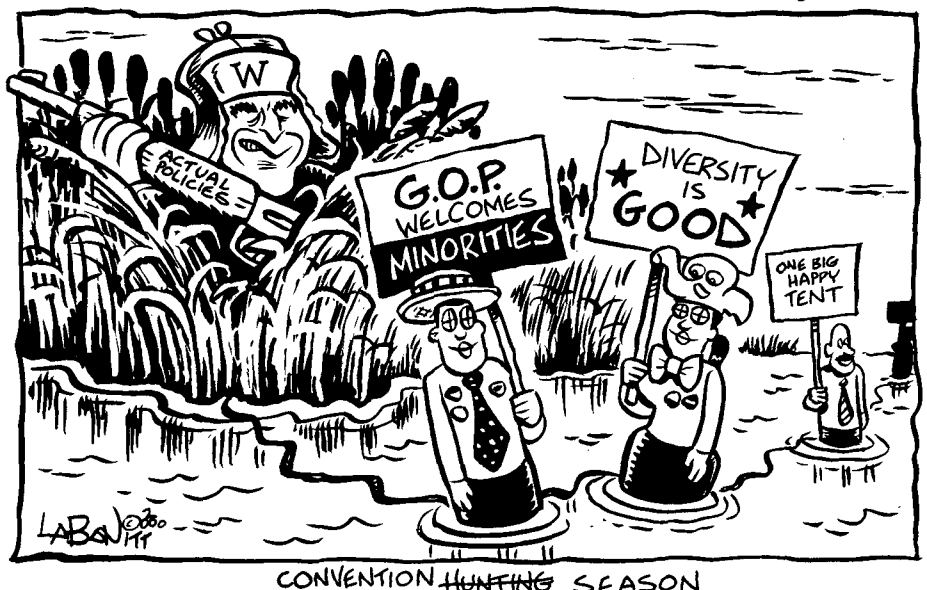
Reducing the power of money in politics is an essential step toward revitalizing democracy, but it is not enough. The winner-take-all electoral system greatly reduces Americans' political choices, pushing candidates relentlessly toward the center. The country would benefit greatly by adopting systems of proportional representation, and the interest in new parties and independents, from Perot to Buchanan to Nader, suggests that many Americans of different political outlooks might rally to a new system that guarantees a voice for divergent and minority views.

Campaign and election reforms are needed not just to create a formally fairer democratic system, but also to shift

Campaign reform is needed not just to create a formally fairer system, but to shift the balance of power.

the balance of power to citizens who are now socially weak and alienated. It is not simply the cleanliness of elections that's at stake. It is a question of whether citizens, especially the working-class majority, have the power through government to shape their own lives. It is ultimately a choice between democracy, or rule by the people, and our growing trend toward plutocracy, or rule by the rich. ■

Terry LaBan



Cleaning Up

Missouri, Oregon consider campaign finance initiatives

By Hans Johnson

Missouri's former Lt. Gov. Harriet Woods has seen the problem of big-money politics from both sides. In an unsuccessful campaign for the U.S. Senate in 1986, she shook down wealthy contributors with finesse to amass a war chest of more than \$4 million, much of which she spent on costly TV commercials. Now, with two Senate bids far behind her, Woods has become a leader in the drive to redeem politics by creating a system of publicly financed state races.

The effort in the Show Me State and a similar bid in Oregon are part of the growing movement for "clean elections" at the state level. New England registered the first wins when Maine approved a public financing initiative in 1996; legislators in Vermont followed suit in 1997. Voters in Massachusetts and Arizona adopted their own initiatives in 1998.

Missouri is a key test for campaign finance reformers. The swing state has

voted for the winner in all but one presidential election since the New Deal, and clean election supporters hope a win this November will encourage federal lawmakers to take action they say is long overdue.

"We are stuck in a system in which it's safe to presume that the candidate with the most money wins," says Woods, who returned to Missouri after a stint in Washington as chair of the National Women's Political Caucus. In that post, she says, she often found herself asking female candidates, "Where are you going to get the money?"

Woods' feminist spin—that clean elections help women make viable challenges to old-boy insiders—is just part of the appeal of Missouri's Fair Elections Act. Sponsors drew on senior citizens and religious groups, as well as gay rights supporters, advocates for the poor and labor unions in gathering more than 100,000 signatures to qualify the measure for the ballot. "We're not tailoring the proposals to what a few allies in the

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capitols think they can get through their chambers," says Nick Nyhart, executive director of Public Campaign, a national advocacy group that promotes clean election measures. "Instead we are taking reform directly to the people and trying to create the possibility of bona fide grassroots democracy."

Hopes for reform run high in Oregon. Backers of the state's clean elections measure, called the Political Accountability Act, include the League of Women Voters as well as green and consumer watchdog groups like the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG). The drive also counts prominent Republicans among its chief petitioners, such as former Rep. John Dellenback and Norma Paulus, formerly Oregon's superintendent of schools. "The campaign here is very lively and includes people who hit the streets in Seattle to protest the WTO," says Maureen Kirk, OSPIRG's executive director. "It's just one step, but they see this measure as a crucial move toward deeper, more radical change."

Both states' measures exemplify the political fine-tuning that local coalitions have perfected with help from Public Campaign. Missouri's Fair

It's Not Easy Being Green

Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader will not appear on the Illinois ballot in November because of the state's strict access requirements.

The Nader campaign turned petitions in with 22,841 signatures on June 26, short of the 25,000 necessary to qualify for the ballot. But according to national Green Party field organizer Todd Main, even if the campaign had met the requirements, their bid "would have been challenged one way or another."

Nader volunteers were given 90 days to collect 25,000 signatures. Unlike Pat Buchanan, Nader did not pay volunteers to collect signatures, says Chicago Green Party member Bob Rudner.

Calling the Illinois ballot access laws "particularly restrictive," the Nader campaign is now suing the state. The high number of signatures needed in such a short period of time places an undue burden on third party candidates, says Nader spokeswoman Laura Jones.

Main adds that Illinois, along with 13 other states, "have very high thresholds" for petition requirements. Other states, like Kentucky, require only 25 signatures.

If the lawsuit is unsuccessful, the Nader campaign will file a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate in all 101 Illinois counties.

Four other third party candidates filed petitions to appear on the ballot. Of the four, only Libertarian candidate David L. Kelley went unchallenged; Reform Party candidate John Hagelin withdrew. Independent candidate Pat Buchanan's request is pending, and Constitution Party candidate Howard Philips' request, like Nader's, was rejected.

Socialist candidate David McReynolds did not file in Illinois.

A new party must receive 5 percent of the vote in any statewide election in order to guarantee inclusion on the ballot.

Elizabeth Brennan

Elections Act borrows from the Maine and Vermont models in setting thresholds for candidates, who must solicit a fixed number of \$5 contributions to receive state funds. For would-be state representatives, contributions of \$15,000 kick in during both a contested primary and a general election once the candidate secures 200 low-dollar donations. In the race for governor, the law requires the collection of 3,000 small checks, and outlays from the state are more generous: \$1 million for a contested primary and another million for the general election.

The Missouri plan would offset the estimated \$13 million cost of payments

to candidates with a tax increase of one cent on every \$100 in assets of corporations with more than \$2 million in holdings. As Missouri Voters for Fair Elections spokesman Doug Gray emphasizes, this tiniest of tax hikes would only affect large enterprises, not small businesses, adding that "94 percent of employers in the state will pay nothing."

Under the Missouri plan, any candidate for state office must comply with disclosure requirements, but is not bound by the public financing system. Those who flout it should beware the added ammunition it provides its outgunned adherents. According to the proposal, candidates outspent by privately financed opponents can receive up to three times the original funding amount from the state to fight back more effectively.

The public financing laws that have inspired this fall's ballot bids are already a reality in Maine. Almost one-third of the 392 candidates who ran in the state's June primary were so-called clean candidates. They disdained big checks from private donors in exchange for preset amounts from a new state elections fund, about \$1,100 for state House candidates and \$4,300 for state Senate candidates in contested races. Funding levels from the state will increase threefold for clean candidates vying in this fall's general election. Though they lost six of seven spotlight races in which they went head-to-head with deep-pocketed foes who opted out of public financing, Maine's clean candidates complained little about the new era they helped inaugurate.

In Vermont, Gov. Howard Dean and Lt. Gov. Douglas Racine, both Democrats, have qualified for public financing, despite caps that allow incumbents seeking re-election only 85 percent of challengers' funding. Their GOP competitors have said they will bypass of the state's new system. The success of Progressive Party gubernatorial candidate Anthony Pollina in qualifying for public funding has boosted reformers' hopes that clean funding will flatten the playing field and end the duopoly on electoral politics. A competitive race by Pollina at the top of the ticket could help Progressive Party candidates build on their five-member delegation in the 150-seat state House.

In their bid to quash reform in the courts, foes of cleaning up elections have fared poorly. The Supreme Court this year reversed an earlier appeals court decision and, in a 6 to 3 ruling, upheld the constitutionality of \$1,000 lids that an earlier Missouri law places on campaign donations to candidates. Maine's system also cleared a hurdle in February, when the First Circuit Court of Appeals allowed it to proceed. In Arizona, clean candidates lined up for funding after the state's highest court gave a green light to public financing in June. But that month a federal district judge rejected Vermont's caps on overall campaign spending for candidates. The public financing portions of the law remained intact, pending a second ruling due in August.

Even as they press for reform, clean election supporters must vie with the same big-money interests whose power they seek to curb. In Missouri, the state chamber of commerce, a longtime heavyweight in campaign spending, has vowed to turn back the clean election measure at the polls. Still, donations to the clean election campaign have been flowing in, including \$150,000 from Public Campaign.

The groundswell at the state level has led Congress to adopt one minor reform. In July President Clinton signed a bill mandating public disclosure of contributors to secretive partisan groups known as 527s, after their federal tax code designation. The groups have underwritten expensive advertising campaigns while avoiding sunshine laws that are supposed to reveal contributors to candidates or established PACs.



ROBERTO SCHMIDT/APF

Lady Liberty: On a national campaign to expose the "corporate whores" that litter Capitol Hill, Jessica "Miss Liberty" Parsley caught up with Republican leaders in Philadelphia. As Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) and a bevy of corporate donors settled in for a \$1,000-a-plate breakfast at the luxurious Four Seasons Hotel, Miss Liberty dropped in, shouting "Lott's been bought" and blowing kisses at the wealthy guests. Shown here at an anti-nuclear demonstration in Philadelphia, Parsley is a member of Washington Action, a coalition of progressive groups touring the country in a bus covered with money. Their final stop will be the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles.

This drama of reform comes amid ever more dour prognoses about the ills of the campaign finance system—and even more robust giving to candidates and the major parties. Federal Election Commission figures for the first 15 months of Campaign 2000 show congressional candidates raking in a total of \$463 million, a 37 percent increase over the 1998 cycle and a 56 percent increase over four years ago. Meanwhile, gifts to the parties of unregulated “soft” money, much of it from corporations, have almost doubled since 1996 to \$170 million. Combined with the \$335 million raised by the presidential candidates, federal political races have already absorbed about \$1 billion—with the most frantic giving still to come.

As Nyhart watches the movement for wholesale campaign finance reform grow stronger, he wonders what kind of populist outcry may at last prompt action from Washington. He asks, “How many states will it take?” ■

Star Strike

Actors demand a better deal from advertising companies

By Ben Winters

CHICAGO—For more than a decade, members of the Screen Actor's Guild (SAG) have been grumbling about their contract with advertisers. Last year they made William Daniels their president on the strength of his promise to negotiate a better deal. The moment of truth came May 1, when Daniels led SAG—along with its sister union the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA)—into a strike that has become the longest walkout in the union's history. Three months later, there's no end in sight.

Actors and other workers are looking to modernize the system under which performers are paid for commercial work, they just can't agree on how to do it. Actors in network television commercials (and those in radio spots) have long been governed by a “pay-for-play” arrangement, under which they receive a check each time their performance is



PETER MORGAN/REUTERS

Richard Dreyfuss spoke at a New York rally on the first day of the actors' strike.

aired. Actors in cable commercials, by contrast, receive a flat fee only.

In April's negotiations, SAG/AFTRA asked that the pay-for-play scheme be extended to cable, a suggestion advertising industry representatives categorically rejected. Advertisers want the opposite: to banish pay-for-play entirely and replace it with increased flat fees. Meeting periodically under federal mandate, the two sides have had zero success in narrowing the gulf. Many in the rank and file see advertisers' intransigence as a strategy to break the unions.

Despite the celebrity status of many union members, attracting press has been a major stumbling block. The unions' adversary is an industry that creates messages for a living, and possesses a natural advantage in television coverage. “When you're on strike against the companies that control and subsidize the media,” says SAG/AFTRA Midwest spokeswoman Linda Swenson, “it's difficult to get the word out.”

There have been some victories, including public endorsements from pop icon Britney Spears and other stars. More tangibly, some 1,600 small ad agencies have signed interim agreements temporarily accepting the unions' terms; this has allowed some of SAG/AFTRA's 135,000 members to get back to work, while bolstering union claims that management negotiators are speaking for only the largest agencies.

Strike action has centered on disrupting commercial shoots and picketing major advertisers and their agencies. In Chicago, the local has rallied Teamsters to add their looming presence to picket lines, and the City Council voted to bar commercial production on city streets for the duration of the strike. The resolution provided a morale boost, though advertisers were quick to point out that it violates federal labor law. In Los Angeles, off-lot commercial production is down dramatically, as advertisers make the expensive decision to move commercial shoots to Canada or to create their street scenes in studio lots.

No further negotiations are scheduled yet. Even when payment issues are resolved, another sticking point will be Webcast commercials, which the union wants included in the new deal. Advertisers say that's not on the table. “It has been very obvious that in two or three years it'll all be coming into your house on one wire,” Swenson says. “This is very much a part of the future of the industry.”

This increasingly bitter strike may be a sign of things to come. Next spring SAG renegotiates its contract with the Hollywood studios, as does the Writer's Guild of America. The same core issues—payment schemes for cable and Internet broadcasts—are certain to arise, and the big studios are reportedly increasing production in anticipation of possible strikes. ■

Renegade or Redeemer?

Hugo Chávez leads Venezuela into a new era

By Steve Ellner

CARACAS—Following his re-election, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez evoked the words of Pablo Neruda, saying: "Simón Bolívar awakes every hundred years. You, the Venezuelan people, have awoken as a result of this process of revolutionary change."

The elections on July 30 put Chávez's popularity with the Venezuelan people, especially the poor, to a test. The economy plunged into a recession during his

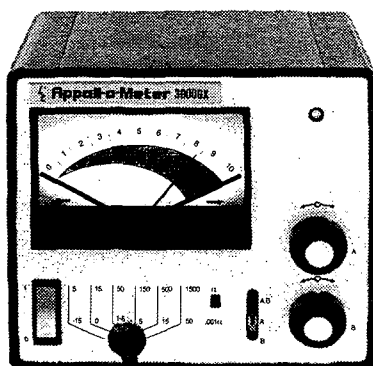
first year as president, and unemployment has reached 18 percent. In spite of these difficulties, Chávez received 59 percent of the vote, 3 percent more than in his initial election in 1998. In addition, his "Patriotic Pole" coalition won about 100 seats in the 165-member Congress.

The "revolution" that Chávez advocates is aimed at improving the lives of the "marginal class," Venezuelans lacking steady work. After two decades of economic downturn, this group now constitutes 70 percent of the working population.

Chávez has lashed out at neoliberalism, although he stops short of calling for a state-run economy. Venezuela's new constitution, which was ratified through a national referendum last December, allows private investments for the state pension system, but mandates government oversight. In addition, the new constitution opens the social security system to those working in the informal economy.

Chávez is not only a populist, but a fervid nationalist—though he carefully eschews anti-American rhetoric. He has resisted persistent State Department pressure to grant the U.S. military permission to fly missions over Venezuelan territory in pursuit of drug traffickers. Last year, he announced that Venezuela's oil industry would not compete with Saudi Arabia for the U.S. market and would comply with OPEC production quotas. This sent oil prices skyrocketing. In recognition of this accomplishment, Venezuela was awarded the OPEC presidency for the first time in its history. According to Foreign Minister José Vicente Rangel, the Chávez administration is trying to shift the global power structure. "Venezuela votes independently in U.N. and OAS meetings," Vicente told *In These Times*. "We follow no particular line."

Although Chávez does exaggerate when he calls his movement a "revolution," some of his policies have



Stalin's World 8.1

Show trials meet show business. A budding entrepreneur in Lithuania is attempting to cash in on his country's less-than-glorious past as a less-than-willing addition to the Soviet Union: He's building what the *Wall Street Journal* describes as "a theme park that combines the charms of a Disneyland with the worst of the Gulag."

Viliumas Malinauskas, who made his fortune in the mushroom business, is busily buying up the giant tacky Lenin statues that used to adorn public squares in towns across the USSR; the park will also contain re-creations of Siberian prison camps, complete with guard towers, barbed wire and bleak barracks, linked together with wooden walkways designed to match those in the original Gulag. To heighten the experience, Malinauskas hopes to build a special train line linking his park to the suburbs of nearby Vilnius. Visitors would be shoved into cattle cars like prisoners and hauled past fake train

stations bearing the names of some of the Soviet Union's most notorious labor camps. "They will be deported right to the information center," Malinauskas told the *Journal*. "It is great to have a vision of something our relatives experienced."

The park has drawn a great deal of criticism from locals, the *Journal* reports, who dub the monstrosity "Stalin's World." "This part of history is full of suffering," says one local politician. "It should not be used for show business."

Jet Setters 5.3

This year's \$297 billion defense budget contains some interesting extras that the military didn't even have on its wish list—including a fleet of snazzy new jets to ferry military brass to and fro. Among the spoils, according to *U.S. News and World Report*: a \$60 million Boeing 737 for the admiral at the helm of the Pacific Command, a \$50 million Gulfstream for the Navy, and a couple of \$7.6 million Cessnas. "God forbid we should encumber the generals with planes that don't smell of new leather," one critic told the magazine.

Appall-o-Meter

By David Futrelle

Reckless Eyeballing 6.8

A judge in the Iranian town of Qir thought that a local shopkeeper was flirting with his wife—so he had the alleged offender locked up; and, according to local papers, roughed up while in custody. After locals upset with the arrest rioted, setting fire to cars and to the local courthouse, an official explained that the whole problem had been caused by a simple "misunderstanding" between the shopkeeper and the judge. According to a Reuters



account of the incident, the shopkeeper hadn't really been flirting with the judge's wife; he was just cross-eyed, "giving a false impression to the judge's wife that he had been leering at her."

far-reaching implications for South America. At the beginning of the new century, no other nation in the continent pursues an independent foreign policy or has put forward viable alternatives to Washington's neoliberal formulas.

Chávez was not always an advocate of peaceful change. As a junior military officer, he led an unsuccessful 1992 coup against President Carlos Andrés Pérez, who was subsequently impeached on corruption charges. Chávez resolved to take up arms after 1,000 civilians were gunned down during a week of mass demonstrations in 1989. For the coup leaders, the enemy was Venezuela's traditional parties, which had ruled the nation for 40 years and were notorious for corruption, patronage and inefficiency.

Ironically, the second in command of the 1992 coup was Francisco Arias Cárdenas, Chávez's principal rival in the July 30 elections. In February, Arias surprised the nation by breaking off from Chávez and running against him. At first, some political pundits speculated that Arias' candidacy was a ruse designed by the two ex-comrades-in-arms—who seemed to support similar goals—to deflect attention from the nation's traditional parties.

In fact, Arias seemed to promise a return to the past. Arias blames Chávez's rhetoric for a spate of land invasions, that he claims have scared off private investors. What's more, Arias' advisers included the same economists who justified the neoliberalism of the nation's previous two elected presidents, one of whom Arias had attempted to overthrow in 1992. Indeed, the traditional parties tacitly supported Arias, although they refrained from an official endorsement.

An array of powerful forces—including the Catholic Church hierarchy, business groups, the middle class, traditional polit-

ical parties and the media—have generally opposed Chávez's new constitution and are now pitted against the government. In the face of such a challenge, Chávez may be tempted to follow the example of Peru's President Alberto Fujimori and turn his back on democratic rules. Equally troublesome is that



Hugo Chávez champions the poor and snubs U.S. interests.

Chávez's movement is largely a one-man show, and the coalition that supports him, including his own party, lacks well-defined, long-term goals.

Nonetheless, the Chávez presidency has inspired a sense of empowerment among the Venezuelan people. As Chávez said, people have "awakened." Maura Jiménez, a slum dweller in the eastern town of Barcelona criticized the large number of candidates who ran as "independents," even though they really represented the discredited traditional parties. She said, "The time when people could be so easily deceived has passed." ■

Steve Ellner teaches economic history at the Universidad de Oriente in Venezuela. He is co-editor of *The Latin American Left: From the Fall of Allende to Perestroika* (Westview).

The New Front

American anti-abortion groups crusade in Ireland

By Kari Lydersen

In the eyes of militant anti-choice leaders, Ireland is the final frontier. The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are the only countries in Europe where abortion is still prohibited by law, except in cases of extreme danger to the mother. Now, just as pro-choice advocates are making headway there, American pro-life groups are flocking to the Emerald Isle to protect the last place where "baby-killing is still illegal."

The Irish government is currently reviewing a study that addresses some of the medical, social and legal issues surrounding abortion. Irish pro-choice advocates predict that the document may lead to more abortion rights for women. Though concrete changes could be years away, the fact that the government is publicly examining the issue at all is a good sign, say pro-choice advocates. For the time being, they want to protect the right to receive "nondirective" counseling about the availability of abortions in England. About 5,000 Irish women pursue this option each year despite the considerable expense—as much as \$850 plus travel costs.

The pro-choice movement has been steadily gaining strength over the past decade. In 1992 Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) director Tony O'Brien and other reproductive rights advocates formed the Alliance for Choice, which introduced "nondirective" reproductive counseling to the country. The Irish Supreme Court also made relatively abortion-friendly rulings in two highly publicized court cases in 1992 and 1995; public debate surrounding the rulings revealed increasing support for reproductive choice, O'Brien says.

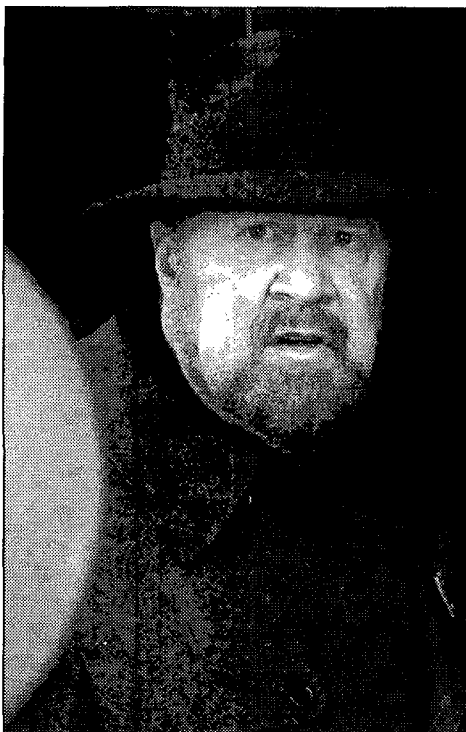
Yet as the pro-choice movement gains momentum, American anti-choice activists feel it is their duty to join the struggle in Ireland by training Irish groups in their own brand of militancy. "They've fought off the British

RODRIGO ARANGUA/AF

for years, they've fought off invaders for years, so their viewpoint is, why should they be exterminating themselves?" says Troy Newman, director of the American group Operation Rescue West.

In March 1999, 60 members of the anti-choice Christian Defense Coalition, an American group, and the Irish group Youth Defence, invaded and shut down the IFPA clinic in Dublin. Staff and clients locked themselves in the back office for five hours as the protesters painted graffiti on the walls and answered the phones saying the clinic was closed and that the providers were murderers. Soon after the invasion, "Wanted" posters bearing director O'Brien's picture were seen posted around the city.

O'Brien says the Americans were clearly leading the protest and egging on the Irish to take a more militant stance. "This wasn't just a protest, this was training, an attempt to directly export some of their tactics," says O'Brien, who recently visited the United States on a speaking tour. "The people with the walkie-talkies were all part of the American contingent. They were the



American anti-choice leader Joseph Scheidler
ones in charge. This creates a situation where people could pick up arms like they have in the United States. I don't want my staff to have to wear bullet-proof vests like they do here."

FERRAN PAREDES/REUTERS

Many of the legislative strides made for the Irish pro-choice cause in the last few years can be traced back to the landmark "X" case in 1992, in which a 14-year-old girl became pregnant after being raped. The court had to decide whether an abortion would be legal in such a situation. Ultimately, it handed down an ambiguous decision that led to constitutional amendments guaranteeing the right to travel for an abortion and the right to share information on obtaining a legal abortion in another country. Irish voters also rejected an anti-choice proposal in 1995, which would have ruled out attempted suicide as a valid risk to life.

O'Brien points out that abortion counseling makes up only a portion of the services offered at his clinic. Among those blocked from entering the clinic in 1999, he says, were a woman with a lump in her breast, a woman looking for the "morning after" pill and women coming in for pap smears. "To deny someone a pap smear because you're supposedly defending life," he says. "That's really shoddy."

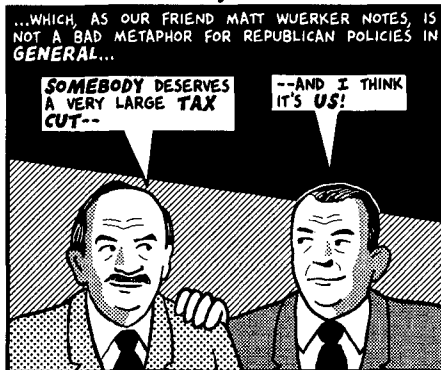
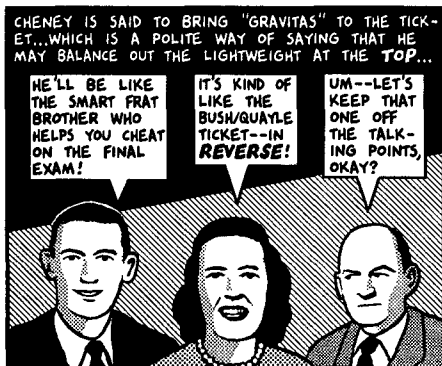
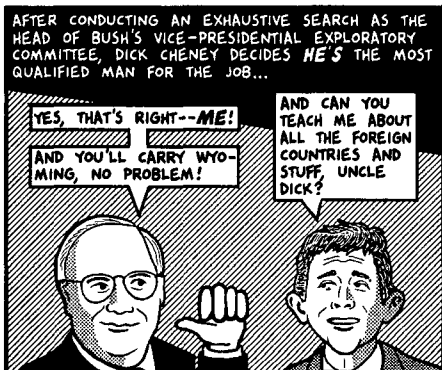
Though there haven't been any takeovers of clinics since the IFPA incident, American pro-choice leaders say they are eager to go back to Ireland to continue these campaigns. Joseph Scheidler, director of the (American) Pro-Life Action League, was among the anti-abortionists who traveled to Dublin last September for an international anti-choice conference sponsored by the Irish groups with support from abroad. Newman and he both say they'll return again soon. "We want to encourage the young people there to keep up the fight," Scheidler says. "These kids have been very instrumental in keeping abortion out of Ireland."

Steve Trombley, CEO of Planned Parenthood in Chicago, notes that anti-abortionists' missions to Ireland are a nice way to impress domestic followers and attract extra donations. "They appeal to romantic notions of Ireland as this last bastion," he says. "It's a ploy on their part to raise money."

While Newman claims that the Americans had helped shut down "every" clinic in Ireland, O'Brien says his clinic is operating as usual. "The more they try to intimidate me," he says, "the more I refuse to be intimidated." ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



www.thismodernworld.com

In Their Corner

By Ted Kline

The Windy City Boxing Club is on the top floor of a warehouse in Lawndale, one of Chicago's roughest neighborhoods. It's a dingy room with scarred wooden floors. Punching bags hang from beams, the walls are papered with fight posters, and sweaty young guys skip rope or jab at each other in the rings. "You'll find a gym like this in every city in the world," says Johnny Lira, a.k.a. "The World Class Pug." "It's always in the ghetto, because the ghetto is where the fighters come from."

Twenty years ago, when he was the No. 1 lightweight contender in the world, Lira worked out in dives like this. Now whenever he visits a gym, he carries a sheaf of flyers proclaiming "Think Union/Talk Pension." One wintry day at the Windy City, the Pug handed a sheet to Ferny Hernandez, a 28-year-old welterweight. "In California, when you're done with your career, you get a pension," Lira told him.

"Just like any other job," marveled Hernandez, who goes by the nickname "Fearless Ferny." "That's beautiful. I don't plan on playing this game forever. I've got to plan something—life after boxing."

Lira, 48, knows what it's like to need a life after boxing. During his ring heyday, he says, "I was pissing my money away, buying cars and cracking 'em up, going on vacation, loaning money to people I shouldn't have."

In 1979, Lira fought Ernesto España for the world lightweight title. España broke his jaw. After his career ended, Lira had nothing to show for his bouts except a nose that looked like Silly Putty. Just a few years out of boxing, he was evicted from his apartment, then spent years sleeping in his car, crashing

with friends and checking into flophouses. "I went from being the No. 1 world contender, living the life of a millionaire, to living the life of a bum," he says.

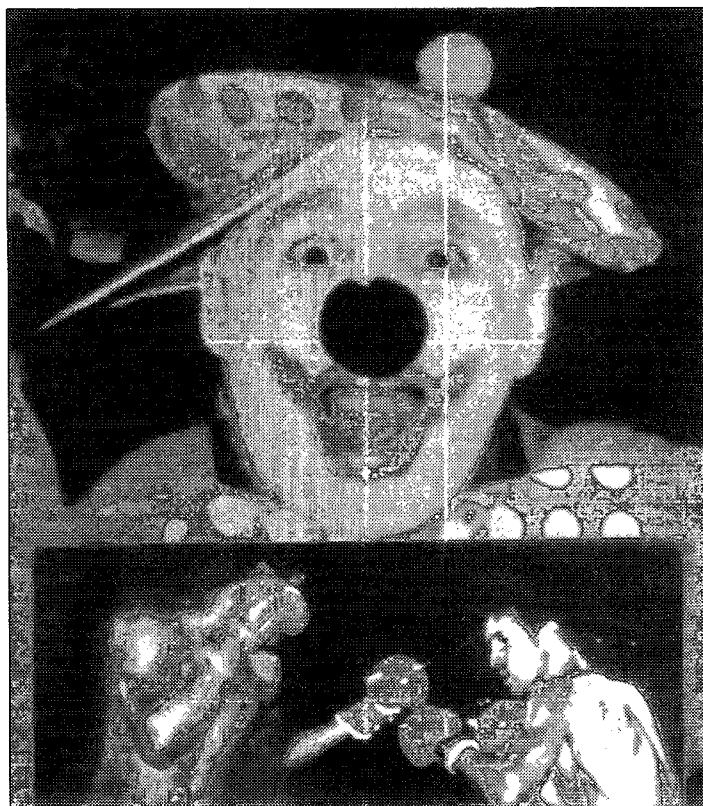
Lately, Lira is flush. He has been judging fights, training boxers and working as a telephone canvasser/enforcer for a Chicago politician. He spent New Year's Eve in Israel, and he whips out \$100 bills to pay for pizza and Chianti at his favorite Italian restaurant. "The overwhelming

Besides recruiting fighters, Lira has been lobbying Washington: He phoned Sen. John McCain's office, trying to convince the lawmaker to put a pension in his Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act, a bill to protect fighters from rapacious promoters. So far, no luck. Currently, California is the only state with a retirement plan for boxers. A group of state boxing commissioners is starting a charitable fund for old fighters, but that will aid only the hardest of the hard-luck cases.

Organizing fighters is tough. Most are poorly educated street kids, too desperate to think past the next purse. (Lira himself is a grade-school dropout who turned to boxing while he was in the Cook County Jail awaiting trial on a burglary charge.) Lira urges them not to fight until the promoters or the state cough up a pension, but "they need \$400, they need \$600. They say, 'John, I've gotta pay the rent.'"

Ferny Hernandez was eager to join the struggle for a pension—he promised to call his congressman and to read the flyer to illiterate fighters—but agreed that boxers might balk at refusing to climb in the ring. "There's some guys, that'd be taking food out of their mouths," Hernandez said. "But I think if we form a coalition, we could do it. A strike would scare anybody."

On the opposite end are cocky boxers who think they'll fight for million-dollar purses on pay-per-view and won't need a pension. But the average club fighter gets beaten up for \$100 a round, and he's washed up by 30. Many end up as "gym rats, guys that are down on their luck," Lira says. "They just hang around trying to pick up crumbs: crumbs of money, crumbs of food, crumbs of a roof over their head. Boxers, their careers and their lives follow the same path as a prostitute: the beauty of their youth is used up and abused. When it's through, they just fall through the cracks of society, and we never hear from them again." ■



COURTESY OF JOHNNY LIRA

Johnny Lira says he dresses like a clown because boxing without a pension "is a joke." He is holding a picture from his days as a fighter, when he was known as "The World Class Pug."

majority of fighters are extremists," he says. "When they got it, they spend it. After 10 or 15 years out of the sport, they're broke and they need a pension."

Lira came up with the idea of a boxing pension after seeing a newspaper article about the Haymarket Square riot. That led him to read up on the labor movement. Actors and baseball players have unions, so why not boxers?



Never Mind the Bollocks

Here's the New Republican Party

By Bill Boisvert

PHILADELPHIA

Day one of the Republican National Convention starts with the National Anthem, given a sultry bubble-gum rendition by a 10-year-old Latina clone of Britney Spears. Then comes the roll call of states casting their delegate votes for Bush, a bit of tedium that sums up the strange mixture of inevitability, anticlimax and hysteria ("Mr. Chairman, the peach state, the great state of Georgia, would like to ... pass!") that is the essence of the modern political convention. Mercifully, it is cut short at Iowa or so to make way for the next musical act, the Interpreters, a Philadelphia-based boy band replete with soulful eyes and sparse facial hair. As the lights dim, they launch into a song about a boy who vows to convince the girl of his dreams that he's not too "sleazy" to date. "A, B, C, D, I love you, do you love me?" they croon to the delegates, who wave their "W is for Women" signs and boogie down.

It's a strange sight as the glitz and snap of MTV rudely shove the innate dorkiness of a Republican Convention to the side; stranger still is the Clintonian tone of seductive come-on. But this is the year the Republicans finally said, *we get it*. They remember the 1992 and 1996 conventions, the disastrous results of Pat Buchanan's truculence and Bob Dole's last hurrah on behalf of once-potent GIs. And they've concluded from the Monica Lewinsky fiasco that a way with women is Bill Clinton's strength, not his weakness. So they have determined that this year the convention *will not be a guy thing*.

Hence the focus on health care, child care, tax relief for young families—what Republican operatives, giving up the

euphemism of "compassionate conservatism," simply call "she issues." Tonight's session is about education, the ideal theme to appeal to suburban obsessions and to showcase the Republicans as the party of social workers of color. The usual Republican boilerplate about character and discipline is repackaged into a softly therapeutic rhetoric of self-esteem, as a parade of African-American and Latino educators extol their own successes at turning inner-city kids into neatly uniformed readers, using nothing more expensive than high expectations. The evening ends with a speech by the famously reluctant Laura Bush, who tells of George's enthusiasm for parenting and literacy. Her message to other women is clear: *Like you, I thought a Bush presidency would ruin my family, but I was wrong.*

To see more of the softer side of the GOP, I went to PoliticalFest 2000, a Republican-themed display venue and shopping mall covering several acres of the Pennsylvania Convention Center in downtown Philadelphia. Vast displays of First Ladies' Inaugural gowns, tea sets and dioramas of the White House dining room cover the floor. Front and center at the Laura Bush Library for young readers is a selection of Dr. Seuss books carefully chosen for their Dubya-like balance of leadership (*If I Ran the Zoo*) and nurturing (*Horton Hatches the Egg*). Beside them sits *A Dance for Three*, a weepie about a pregnant teen who wonders, "Did I do it because I loved him? Did I want a baby? Or was it the madness taking hold inside me?" (She gives the baby up for adoption.)

A display of presidential biographies downplays political history in favor of domestic melodrama. One of James Buchanan's three paragraphs is devoted to the tragic death of his fiancée. Ulysses S. Grant's bio tells us that "In 1873 the economy collapsed into a five year depression. But Grant's home life was happy." LBJ's blurb confides that on their very first date, Lady Bird "admitted to being attracted to him."

Computer terminals are everywhere, offering the sort of online learning technologies that are touted in the Republican platform. They're not all bad; one offers links to the Green and Reform Party Web sites, as well as an intelligent discussion of the 1896 McKinley-Bryan presidential race. Unfortunately, all the kids are clustered around a talking robot, which quizzes them with "political trivia" questions like, "Who played the president in *Air Force One*?"

The robot is from a Pennsylvania dotcom that is clearly hoping people will press the "Technology in Pittsburgh" menu option on the video monitor. When I do, the monitor shunts into a 5-minute video about BodyMedia, a line of blood pressure cuffs and electrodes you wear to monitor your vital signs as you exercise. A salesman materializes to ask if I have any questions. The kids flee. Another menu option asks visitors to participate in a poll asking whether robots should be allowed to vote. I click on "Results" to find that "By all means we should emancipate our enslaved brothers" is losing out to "No way! They should get back to building our cars!" by a vote of 121 to 173.

Many education initiatives—classroom TV channels, or corporate-sponsored computer labs—are like the robot: vapid technological facades that cover up infomercials with sinister ideological agendas. But it's hard to tell whether Principal Bush will save kids from that or cram it down their throats. Probably neither. The convention speakers mention a Bush pledge to spend \$5 billion to ensure that "every child can read at grade level by grade three"—there's a goal to fire the imagination—and there is vague talk of encouraging voucher experiments, charter schools and the like, but the platform makes it plain that education is a state and local responsibility, not a federal one.

The Bush platform is clear enough on some issues to make a lot of people recoil from the Republicans' outstretched arms. The abortion plank calls for an *absolute* ban, even when the mother's life is in danger. Opposition to gun control is still adamant. The INS is to be beefed up, and extended family members of immigrants excluded from entry. Right-to-work laws are endorsed, and a ban on using union dues for political activities is threatened.

But the party soldiers on in its effort to convince the public that the authentic face of Republicanism is female, brown, working-class and kid-friendly. The face of Republican tax policy is Kim Jennings, a 26-year-old single mom, in school and supporting her daughter on less than \$25,000 a year. Seated in the underground convention command center, amidst a warren of cubicles housing four speech writers, a speech "developer," a speech "policy" person, a

speech coach and several rehearsal rooms, Jennings told me that the Republicans contacted her through a board that administers her college scholarship. "They showed me what I was paying now," she says, "and what I would pay under the Bush plan, and it was about a \$1,000 less."

Jennings would indeed pay less under the Bush plan, which cuts the lowest tax rate from 15 percent to 10 percent and doubles the child tax credit from \$500 to \$1,000. The rich, who would receive similar tax cuts in their much larger incomes, would make out like bandits, with their tax bills cut by many thousands, sometimes millions, of dollars. And of

course, the Republican plans to abolish estate taxes on the wealthy and lower taxes on married couples sail right over the heads of single moms like Jennings. But no one at the convention spoke on behalf of

the rich and their heirs.

Tax policy always brings out the worst in Republicans. At the "Scrapping the Code" pseudo-debate between flat-tax enthusiast Dick Armey and sales-tax enthusiast Billy Tauzin, the Republicans pushed the envelope on what Al Gore would call risky tax schemes. I've never heard two raspy-voiced Southern congressmen promote so many false and pernicious doctrines at one time. The average American pays more to the

Her message is clear: Like you, I thought a Bush presidency would ruin my family, but I was wrong.



JOEFF DAVIS

IRS than he pays for food, clothing, shelter and transportation combined, Armey said falsely. Income taxes add 25 percent to the cost of American goods—a tax that foreign imports don't have to pay, Tauzin responded perniciously.

Armey invoked the freedom and dignity of the individual against the meddling of the tax engineers. Tauzin recalled the bravery of the patriots at the Boston Tea Party (without mentioning that they were protesting a sales tax). Suddenly, the moderator broke in with the news that the police were using tear gas and water cannons against protesters in the city. A cheer went up from the assembled Republicans.

The black-clad, masked anarchist is, of course, the iconic opposite of the Republicans' cherished soccer mom. I tagged along with an anarchist band one day as they were

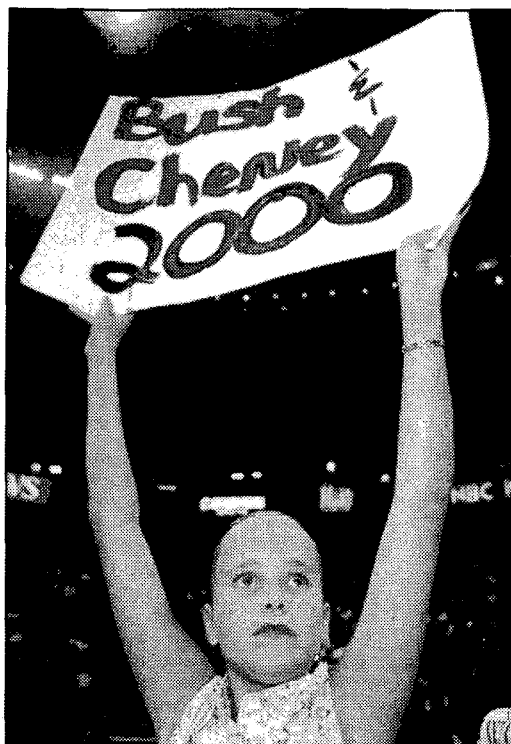
tailed through the streets by a mob of Philadelphia bicycle police. I've never found bike cops, with their absurd Tyrolean outfits of short pants and rakish, swept-back helmets, to be very intimidating, but the anarchists were clearly unnerved. They were wary of answering my questions, but their legal adviser urged them to "hug the media" to help ward off the police. One of the anarchists hugged me.

The anarchists insisted that they had no organization or ideology. All decisions were made by consensus. One was an anarcho-primitivist, opposed to all technology (despite the bright-yellow cell phone he kept muttering into), another an anarcho-syndicalist. Their orthodoxy is an absolutist rejection of all orthodoxy. The only thing that united them was allegiance to "the natural individual powers of the human being." I told them they sounded like Republicans. Could they make common cause with anarcho-capitalists? Sure, they said.

One 17-year-old anarchist was there with his mother, an internist from Woodstock, Massachusetts, dressed in the sensible slacks and knit shirt of a soccer mom. She wasn't an anarchist, she said, just a democratic socialist, there to provide medical care and try to keep people out of jail. Rain started to come down, and the anarchists hailed a cab.

Later in the week, I sat in as a group of Young Republicans listened to a Florida State Health Department official admonish them that Republicans could be a majority only when they claim the She Issues. But commitment seemed to waver, especially in the back of the room, where some of the more boisterous in the group loudly commented on the short skirt worn by the national co-chairwoman. She turned to them with a pained expression and brought her thumb and forefinger together in the universal symbol of tininess, a sort of genteel "fuck you" gesture I've seen a lot of Republican women use when Republican men are around.

On the surface, the Young Republicans couldn't be more different from the anarchists. Anarchists wear black denim and spiky hair; YRs wear business suits and brush cuts. Anarchists use consensus; YRs use *Robert's Rules of Order*. Anarchists are cagey about telling you where they're from; YRs can't stop braying about their great state of origin. And they recognize each other as the enemy. At the end of the



JOEFF DAVIS

meeting, someone announced that the Secret Service was looking for YR police officers and military personnel to volunteer for security duty against the protesters.

Unlike their anarchist counterparts, conservatives are all about orthodoxy. At the College Republican luncheon with Newt Gingrich, everyone seemed to have been exhaustively briefed by the party leadership. None would admit to being McCain supporters, although they support campaign finance reform. When asked about Dick Cheney's embarrassing congressional voting record, they uniformly responded that legislative acts are vast and compendious, so we can't be sure exactly what he was voting against, as if the Clean Water Act had been some obscure rider on a pork-barrel appropriation. They don't seem to realize how lame that sounds. They're for sales taxes but against

estate taxes; for sin taxes, but against gas taxes. Hewing to the party line, they are as self-contradictory as the anarchists.

They worship Gingrich, who ends his speech on his usual note of self-satisfied futurism about the unstoppable "rate of change." Then, inevitably, in walks ex-Sex Pistols frontman Johnny Rotten, an MTV camera crew in tow, his blazing yellow shirt festooned with drawings of the Bohr atom and the word "Web," symbols of unstoppable change. The original anarchist punk clasps hands with the original conservative globalist, the College Republicans gather round and send up a whoop of joy, and the circle is unbroken.



JOEFF DAVIS

Fighting my way out of the dream logic of American political culture, I walk over to four waitresses standing in the corner. We talk about She Issues. Three of them have no health insurance. Should the government pay for health care? Yes, but not for the rich. How about a sliding scale? A sliding scale works for them. What about the estate tax? Not for ordinary people. How about for big estates, say over a million dollars? Yeah, rich people should have to pay the tax.

None of the four are Republicans. One is a Democrat. One likes Ralph Nader. I ask her why. "Because this," she says, sweeping her hand around the marble ballroom, toward the chandeliers far above, toward the red-white-and-blue streamer on the walls, toward Johnny Rotten sadly intoning "this space is for rent" as he poses for photos, "all this is bullshit." ■

The Battle of Philadelphia

By Dave Lindorff

PHILADELPHIA

The "Battle of Philadelphia" got off to a much tamer start than the confrontations between demonstrators and police in Seattle last November and in Washington in April, but it was clear from the beginning that things would get nasty. And by August 1, midway through a week of planned protests, they did.

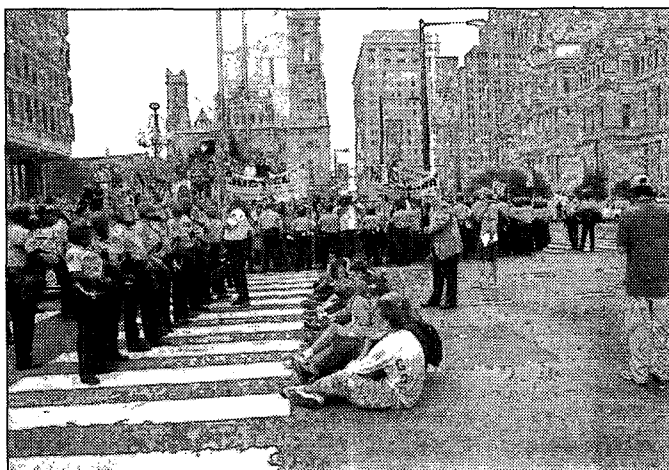
Police had been generally easy-going during earlier demonstrations over the weekend. But on July 31, when the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWURU) led a non-permitted march of several thousand people down the length of South Broad Street to the First Union Center, the site of the GOP convention, the mood was clearly different. And by the next day's demonstrations, things had become downright confrontational. As opponents of the death penalty and supporters of Pennsylvania Death Row inmate Mumia Abu-Jamal took to the streets that day trying to block the flow of traffic between the downtown hotel area and the South Philadelphia site of the convention, the police were out in force, and they weren't smiling.

Thousands of demonstrators, some coordinated through a loose network of observers equipped with cell phones, adopted hit-and-run tactics throughout the afternoon and evening, blocking intersections with their bodies. The heavily armed police, their numbers bolstered by reinforcements from the state police, highway patrol and national parks police force, responded with shows of force. They pushed demonstrators off the street, pressing forward behind teams of bike cops.

Relations between police and the minority community are strained in this racially segregated city, especially over the case of Abu-Jamal. On Death Row since 1982 when he was convicted of murdering Daniel Faulkner, a white police officer, this African-American journalist and former Black Panther awaits the decision of a federal judge on whether to hold a hearing to consider his *habeas corpus* appeal for a new trial. The Pennsylvania Fraternal Order of Police has been actively lobbying for years for Abu-Jamal's death, and for many Philadelphia officers the issue is personal. On the other side, a broad coalition of activists, black and white, has been working for years to keep Abu-Jamal's case in the international spotlight.

Given this background, the sense of confrontation at the August 1 demonstration was palpable, as when two bicycle cops angrily shoved their way through a crowd burning an American flag on the street and doused the flames with their

bottles of spring water. For the most part, the police exercised restraint during arrests, as dozens of street-blocking demonstrators locked arms and went limp, waiting to be arrested and dragged to waiting sheriff's busses. Nearly 300 people were arrested.



COPYLEFT 2000 NEWS FOR CHANGE

But sometimes that restraint collapsed, as when two cops grabbed one young demonstrator who was arguing with a police officer on horseback during a sweep of one intersection. The demonstrator, who was standing on the curb where he was not obstructing traffic or violating an order to disperse, was yanked into the street and thrown face down onto the pavement, where five police officers jumped on him, wrenching his arms

behind his back while his head was pressed into the macadam by one officer's knee. His face bloodied, he was led off to a wagon, while other protesters witnessing the incident shouted, "He didn't do anything!"

Meanwhile, the police suffered casualties of their own, with several needing medical treatment for injuries, and some 30 police cruisers exhibiting spray paint damage, smashed windshields and slashed tires.

Earlier on August 1, the police had gone to a warehouse rented by activists in West Philadelphia for use as a workshop to construct protest banners and puppets. After surrounding the building, the police demanded entry, claiming they had received reports of weapons inside. There was a temporary stand-off as the 70 or so activists inside refused to unlock the doors, and the nearly 100 police outside waited for the department to obtain a search warrant from a local judge.

Once armed with the search warrant, the police entered the building, arresting most of those inside. They claimed to find PVC piping and chains like those used by demonstrators to link their arms and make removal from intersections more difficult, but there were reportedly no signs of the alleged weapons used to justify the raid. Two city councilmen who raced to the scene denounced the police raid, which was similar to an effort before the start of the convention to use fire-code violation claims to shut down demonstration headquarters (a tactic also used to disrupt the April protests in Washington). Stefan Presser, legal director of the Philadelphia chapter of the ACLU, announced plans to file a civil rights lawsuit against the city for the police raid on the puppet-makers, which he said was a clear case of

harassment of legitimate protesters.

Philadelphia authorities went to great lengths to try to minimize public disorder and protest during the GOP convention. This was seen as a great opportunity for the city, just recovering from a brush with bankruptcy, to show itself off to other potential convention hosts. Until the last minute, municipal authorities were denying march and rally permits to any organization,

and were trying to force all protesters to confine their activities to a small fenced-in park out of sight of the convention center.

Nearly all major protest groups rejected this plan to confine their activities to a small "protest pit," and several, including Unity 2000, the main protest coalition, had threatened to sue, with backing from the ACLU. Unity 2000 eventually was granted a permit for a march on July 30, the eve of the convention. The event went smoothly, with some 10,000 marchers, most in a festive mood, moving under a bright sun along the broad boulevard past the city's museum row. The entire way, the march was lined with riot-ready police, but the mood that day was mellow even among the cops, and there were few incidents.

The following day, however, was more tense, as several thousand activists assembled without a permit for the KWRU march. As their numbers swelled and would-be marchers spilled into the street around City Hall, police kept pressing them back toward the sidewalk and insisting there would be no march. Then, in a brilliant tactical move, the organizers suddenly pulled a rope across the street, blocking all traffic, and an advance contingent of small children and disabled people in wheelchairs swept into the suddenly cleared intersection. The police, faced with the option of attacking the kids and the handicapped or of falling back, and under the glare of television klieg lights, decided to retreat. Other marchers fell into line, and the nonpermitted march was underway.

At several points along the route, police tried to stop the marchers or turn them away from Broad Street, the city's main north-south artery. But having backed down the first time, they were unable to stop the marchers' forward momentum. The march continued for the length of the street to the convention center, where police finally succeeded in turning the line into the FDR Center—the designated protest area for the convention. "This was a big victory," crowed Jonathan Blazes, legal adviser to KWRU. "We didn't know what to expect. The city didn't want this march—which is to call attention to the plight of the city's and the nation's poor and homeless—to happen,



and we were able to make it happen. The police saw the number of people involved, and they finally made the sensible decision to allow it."

The reaction of locals to the escalating demonstrations was mixed, with commuters caught in the traffic tie-ups expressing anger and frustration at the demonstrators, while many pedestrian bystanders offered support. The local and national media were out in force to cover the

protests—sometimes reporters, camera crews and photographers outnumbered protesters—but the tone of the reporting was decidedly pro-police.

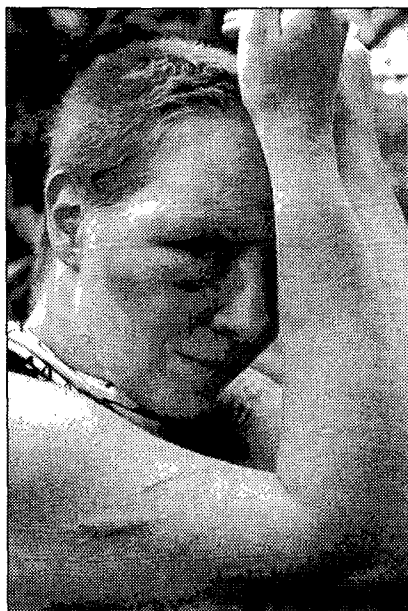
This bias was particularly evident at local CBS affiliate WKYW Channel 3, which bragged about being first with the reports of the street battles between police and demonstrators on August 1. The news report that evening focused entirely on injuries to police and damage to police equipment. Police officials were interviewed, but no demonstrators were asked to explain their issues or actions. The one segment showing a protester being arrested, which was accompanied by visuals of the arrest taken from a helicopter, actually showed the demonstrator

shouting at a policeman before he was grabbed by two other cops. "He was shaking his finger at a mounted policeman," the anchor intoned gravely, failing to comment that such an action is hardly a crime.

It remains to be seen what impact these rallies, marches and more militant protest actions in Philadelphia will have. The number of demonstrators was considerably smaller than at the earlier protests in Seattle and Washington. The biggest protest this time was the Unity 2000 march, which probably had no more than 10,000 participants (even though rally organizers put the total at under 25,000). Unlike the WTO in Seattle or the World Bank and IMF in Washington, both clear targets of protest, the focus in Philadelphia was not so obvious. Unity 2000 organizers stressed early on that theirs was not an anti-Republican demonstration, but rather was aimed at a broad range of issues, from arms spending and government corruption to environmental protection and workers rights. Thus it was little surprise that not far from a contingent of marchers from the

Socialist Workers Party was a group of veterans from the defeated South Vietnamese Army.

If the protests in Philadelphia showed anything, it was that even with considerable advance planning, aggressive surveillance, overwhelming numbers and the arrest of more than 400 protesters, the police cannot expect to keep traffic flowing in the face of dedicated demonstrators willing to face arrest. ■



"Bork," the *nom de guerre* of one Philadelphia protester (above), was dragged and kicked by police in the streets of Philadelphia.

Working It

Gore can't win without unions



Is labor's love lost?

By David Moberg

When Al Gore's campaign was floundering last fall, organized labor's early endorsement saved him in the key initial primary contests. Now, despite a strong economy and favorable popular sentiment on his campaign issues, the vice president is struggling in the polls, and the labor movement may once again come to the rescue.

If union members turn out to vote as they have in recent elections, and vote for Gore by the same margins that they backed Clinton, they are likely to tip the balance in the key swing states, like Michigan and Ohio, and secure a Democratic victory in November. There are, however, a few bumps in this road. The threat is less from a groundswell of union member support for Bush (or even Pat Buchanan or Ralph Nader) than from a lack of enthusiasm for Gore. One union's internal polling, for example, showed that its members' dislike of Bush was much stronger than their liking for Gore. "The real challenge will be getting people to vote," one union staffer says, "convincing them that it's worth getting in the car and going to the polls."

Like other voters, union members typically rank Social Security or education as their main election year concerns. But labor strategists are convinced that Bush is acutely vulnerable with voters in union households on many gritty work

issues, especially when he is linked to recent Republican anti-labor initiatives in Congress. A group of building trades workers ranged from strongly pro-Bush to weakly pro-Gore before one recent focus group started, but as the moderator contrasted Gore and Bush views on work-related issues—such as union rights or wage, safety and overtime standards—opinions in the focus group shifted; within just 20 minutes, the group was 9-to-1 in favor of Gore.

Even if Gore doesn't highlight these issues, unions will, and the contrast may swing many votes in union households. While labor also will play up broad populist themes, tagging Bush and Cheney as the Big Oil candidates who oppose a minimum-wage hike while proposing tax cuts for the rich, "our niche is to get information out on workplace issues," says AFL-CIO political director Steven Rosenthal.

But especially in the key Midwest industrial states, many union members feel betrayed by the Clinton-Gore administration's approach to trade and the global economy. Clinton's decision to pursue permanent normal trade relations with China over objections of unions stoked old fires of resentment for NAFTA, the World Trade Organization and other fights. "Between Bush and Gore there's no question whom it's going to be," says Steelworkers President George Becker. "The ques-

tion is how to mobilize members after they feel they've been let down on the China deal by President Clinton. I think there's a way, but it's not good enough for Gore to tell me. He has to tell it to our members."

After the China vote, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney tried to help Gore by distancing him from Clinton's initiative, but many labor leaders got angry when Gore tapped former Commerce Secretary Bill Daley, architect of the China vote campaign, to be his campaign chairman. "It was arrogant stupidity," one official says. "It was way disrespectful."

Although union leaders let Daley know they were still upset about trade when he attended their August AFL-CIO executive council meeting in Chicago, they were once again ready to work with him. "We'll see if he can run a campaign in support of workers as well as he can run a campaign against workers," Sweeney reportedly said.

Beyond the industrial unions, however, global economic policies are less salient to many union members than wages, Social Security, health care or education. Also, pragmatic union staff often sympathize with American Federation of Teachers President Sandra Feldman's argument that "we have to put [China] behind us" since "there's no question who's head and shoulders above the other in regards to working families' issues."

The issue is not just one vote on China or even trade more broadly, argues the AFL-CIO's Stewart Acuff. It's the emergence for the first time in many decades of a strong popular movement with labor at its core that is critical of unrestrained corporate capital. As Rosenthal notes, "The real damage [from the China vote] is among activists who have to be energized in order to turn out voters. That's where things get set back."

This fall unions will place an even greater focus on turning on and turning out union household voters in large numbers. The expected continued decline in voter participation "increases the importance of base voters," such as union members, African-Americans and the growing ranks of Latinos, says AFSCME political director Larry Scanlon.

Despite television's political dominance, labor is placing more of its chips on an old-fashioned tactic—union members leafleting and talking to fellow workers on the job. Unions have rediscovered this is their most powerful tool: Rosenthal says that 76 percent of members who received a flyer at work voted as their union suggested in the 1998 election. But only 11 percent got that personal message.

Starting last year the AFL-CIO and national unions began organizing committees of volunteer activists in 25 targeted states and 71 congressional districts—shifting away from earlier reliance on outside organizers who were sent to hot spots. These 500 trained political organizers—in addition to volunteers from individual unions like the Service Employees, who

are putting 100 members to work in Pennsylvania alone—are expected to keep the political fires hot in key districts.

Another early foray in the campaign to get workers talking to other workers about the election is the "Texas Truth Squad," a team of union members traveling the country and talking about life for workers under Gov. Bush—low pay for public workers, a lack of collective bargaining rights, and cutbacks in workers compensation. They're persuasive partly because they seem honest and unscripted. Despite her criticisms of Bush and support for Gore, for example, corrections officer Sheri Cagle still admits, "I was disgruntled with the China thing. I felt sold out. I would have appreciated it if Gore had stood up and said, 'I disagreed.'"

The United Food and Commercial Workers are training workers how to talk more effectively with the press as well as with their fellow workers. They urge union members to avoid abstract policy statements and canned political lines and instead to speak just as they would in the break room at work. "It's not the soccer moms this year," says UFCW communications director

Greg Denier, echoing an argument advanced in detail by Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers in their new book, *America's Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters*. "This is the election of the cashier moms, working-class women. We're making sure the cashier moms express their concerns."

While both Democrats and Republicans are promoting centrist, soft images at their conventions, labor strategists think working people will be drawn to Gore through sharp contrasts to the GOP. Bush's choice of vice-presidential candidate Dick Cheney—who had a 6 percent lifetime labor voting record in Congress—was "terrific," Rosenthal says, backing up labor's portrait of Bush as a right-winger at heart. "We have an opportunity this year we've never had before," adds Communications Workers President Morton Bahr. "We can predict what legislation will be passed if Bush wins and Republicans keep Congress" just by looking at vetoed Republican legislation to undermine workplace safety, reduce overtime pay protection, or undermine union rights.

"The real challenge will be convincing people that it's worth getting in the car and going to the polls."



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"The conventions may look the same," says Service Employees President Andrew Stern, "but the issues are not the same."

Such stark contrasts will be needed to generate the turnout Gore needs from labor. In 1992, 19 percent of voters came from union households; in 1996, it was 23 percent. Labor is aiming to turn out 25 percent of the vote this year. If unions can get rank-and-file households to back Gore as strongly as they voted for Clinton in 1996, then Gore is likely to win. For example, Rosenthal says, if union members in Michigan turn out in proportion to their registration (28 percent) and vote for Gore as polls now suggest, Bush is likely to win easily; but if union households match their 1996 share of the vote (40 percent) and support for Clinton, Gore would win narrowly.

But it is precisely in states like Michigan where Nader could throw a monkey wrench in such Gore plans, especially since the Teamsters and Auto Workers—who hadn't made an endorsement as of early August—are both big there. While Nader has little support from unions (only the independent California Nurses Association has endorsed him), many leaders respect him and agree with his message. Despite their leaders' pragmatic support for Gore, a slice of union members will vote for him (about 8 percent of Service Employee members, for instance, say they back Nader).

While many labor political strategists are not entirely happy with Gore's campaign message—or complain that there doesn't seem to be a clear message—they are determined to craft their own effort for Gore that has a stronger message. For that to succeed, Gore can't damage the credibil-

ity of unions with their own members—which the China vote threatened to do for many industrial unions. Unlike 1996, this year the labor movement did not cede the writing of the platform to the conservative Democratic Leadership Council. Instead, labor modified much of the language to make it more palatable—including advocacy of workers rights and environmental protection in trade agreements and replacing praise for "free trade" with more conditioned embrace of "open trade" that lifts standards everywhere rather than creating a race to the bottom.

Structurally, organized labor this year plays a role for the Democrats similar to that played by the Christian Coalition for the Republicans—generating grassroots enthusiasm over strongly drawn issues, while tolerating a moderate candidate who does not publicly promote its full agenda. But labor's agenda—especially if it is interpreted to include such ideas as universal health care and public education—is closer to the historic heart of the Democratic Party than the religious right's agenda is to the Republicans. It is also closer to a real majoritarian strategy that could appeal to even nonunion white workers who are swing voters, as Teixeira and Rogers argue.

If they can lift him to victory in November, unions will have a president who is clearly more sympathetic than George W. Bush would be, and even slightly more attuned to their cause than Bill Clinton has been. Yet despite their crucial role, because of the weight of business interests and corporate money in the Democratic Party, unions will still not be able to count on Gore as a consistent or visionary champion for labor's institutional interests or working family issues. ■



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Black Radicals Regroup

When organizers of the Black Radical Congress decided that “education, not incarceration” would become its unifying theme, they had no idea that their crusade would be joined by Colin Powell. Yet the retired Army general told the party faithful at the Republican National Convention: “We either build our children, or we build more jails. It’s time to stop building jails.”

When the rallying cry of black radicals can so easily be adopted by the GOP’s Great Black Hope, it’s clear that our skyrocketing incarceration rate is a prominent national concern. It’s also clear, however, that the Black Radical Congress (BRC) must do more to distinguish itself from the welter of interests currently clogging the national discourse. That was one of the goals of the BRC’s first organizing conference, held in Detroit on June 23 to 25. Although the gathering attracted just 300 people, Bill Fletcher Jr., one of the BRC’s founders, declared it a success. “We aimed for a much smaller crowd this time,” explains Fletcher, who works as a special assistant to AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. “We wanted to clarify some structural elements, focus on training organizers, and sharpen our focus.”

Detroit was an apt location for the event; the ravaged city is a graphic testament to the BRC’s central argument that the booming economy has been a bust for many. As the stock market has climbed upward, so has the number of black inmates, police shootings and racial-profiling abuses. And while the black middle class has expanded slightly, the gap between those doing well and those barely surviving has grown.

The BRC’s only previous conference was held in Chicago in June 1998, and it attracted more than 2,000 community activists, students, academics, labor leaders and others. The Chicago gathering was the outgrowth of several meet-

*By
Salim
Muwakkil*

ings held by a group of black academics and organizers who bemoaned the growing marginalization of the black left—especially among black youth. The energetic event convinced organizers that the time was ripe for a new organization. In the words of the preface to the group’s “principles of unity,” the BRC was “formed to create a national forum for the reunification of the national movements and local organizations that historically fought and today fight bravely to challenge political, economic, and social injustice in America.”

Surprisingly large numbers of young activists attended the 1998 conference, and many returned home to form local organizing councils, enlivened with a notion of radicalism distinct from conservative nationalist groups like the Nation of Islam, the best organized and dominant black organization of the ’90s. In addition to infusing class analysis into their racial vision, these newly energized radicals spoke out against homophobia and domestic violence. “There is no doubt that the first BRC meeting had a huge affect on activist black youth,” says Kamaria Ngozi, the twenty-something media coordinator of Chicago’s local organizing council. “You can see and hear the influence everywhere, from radical hip-hop groups like Dead Prez to increased youth participation in protests against police brutality.”

Local organizing committees in Chicago, St. Louis and Minneapolis have been working with community coalitions on a host of issues, from police brutality to public housing reform to “black-on-black” crime. In Los Angeles, BRC members have joined with activists in the Asian-American and Mexican communities on labor and social justice issues. The BRC is perhaps most active in New York, where members have been deeply involved in protests against police brutality and have sponsored numerous public forums and educational events.



The GOP's Great Black Hope is starting to sound like a radical.

negotiations. Tim Judah "was there," and in his book *Kosovo: War and Revenge*, which relies heavily on NATO sources, he found that NATO was good, negotiating in good faith, and that the Serbs were bad and "abstained from real negotiations." But there is the problem of an Appendix B proviso, which NATO inserted late in the process, that would have allowed NATO to occupy all of Yugoslavia. Critics have argued this was designed to make negotiations fail. Judah contends that this was put in as a part of a "wish-list" that "could certainly have been whittled down" in bargaining, although he offers no evidence in support of this claim and even admits that his account is only speculation. Hockenos accepts this NATO-friendly interpretation uncritically, adding that "at no point did the Serbs budge from their refusal to consider the principle of an international military force in Kosovo." Of course, NATO never budged from its demand for a NATO occupation force, but for Hockenos this is not intransigence and a refusal to negotiate, but adherence to "principle."

A further problem for Hockenos is that a State Department official told reporters that the Appendix B proviso was inserted deliberately to raise the bar and allow the Serbs to be bombed. (See "Rolling Thunder: The Rerun" by George Kenney in *The Nation*, June 14, 1999.) Hockenos finds this admission inconvenient and therefore ignores it. He also fails to mention that the Serb Parliament in February and March 1999 had voted to allow "substantial autonomy" to Kosovo plus an "international force," and they had earlier allowed a large Kosovo Verification Mission. Arguably, the Serb Parliament set out "bargaining chips" that could have been altered by negotiations, but Hockenos, who swallows readily the claim that Appendix B was only a bargaining ploy, does not allow Yugoslavia any claim to be using bargaining chips of its own.

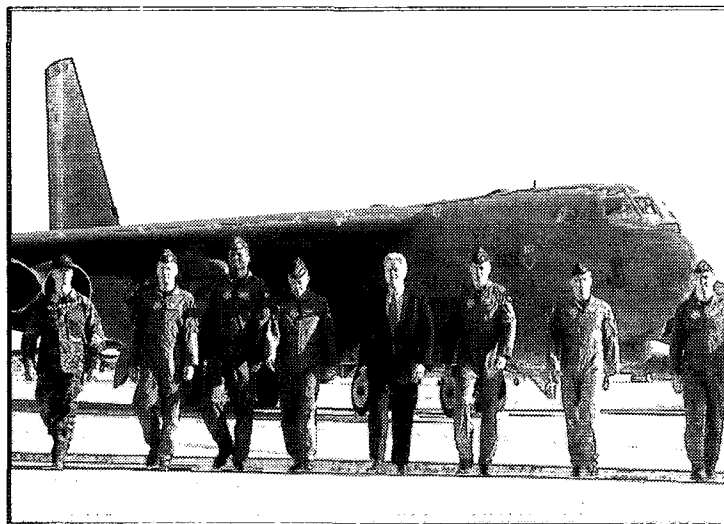
An alternative view of Rambouillet is that the United States and NATO, which had been preparing to fight for almost a year, spent most of their time at Rambouillet urging the Albanians to sign on to allow them to bomb (and in one of his many contradictions,

If the performance contradicts the rhetoric, as in Kosovo, this suggests the rhetoric of human rights should not be taken seriously.

Judah acknowledges that Washington begged the Kosovo Albanians to sign on to provide NATO with a pretext to bomb). NATO officials did not want to negotiate with the Serbs except to accept surrender to a full NATO takeover of Kosovo, and in the end were so eager to bomb first that they inserted the clause in Appendix B that made bombing inevitable. This is no doubt conspiracy theory.

Hockenos does eventually concede that it would be "naïve" to deny that geopolitical factors entered NATO calculations, but he puts this in NATO apologetic terms: It is not "a grand imperialist plot" or a desire for friendly client states who will do their bidding, or an aim to dominate, but rather a quest for "a stable Southeastern European region."

But Hockenos still insists, without a shred of evidence, that the humanitarian element was "a central factor in the decision-making processes" of NATO, just as NATO says it was. Can Hockenos explain why Clinton and Blair actively supported Turkey in its implementation of a vast campaign of ethnic cleansing of Kurds? Why was the "central factor" in



STEPHEN JAFFE/AFP

the Balkans such a complete non-factor in Turkey (among other places)?

There is also the problem that the humanitarian bombing created more pain and ethnic cleansing than existed prior to the supposedly humane action. Jiri Dienstbier, the U.N. rapporteur for human rights in Kosovo and a former Czech foreign minister under Vaclav Havel, recently estimated that 330,000 Serbs, Roma and other non-Albanians have been driven from their homes in Kosovo under NATO occupation, and he says that the intervention "has not solved any human problem, but only multiplied the existing problems."

This would suggest that maybe the humane objective was not "central," but for Hockenos no such reflections arise; and if there wasn't adequate "follow-up" (read: ethnic cleansing in Kosovo reached new heights under NATO authority), this only indicates to him that the Great Powers must do better if we are to "take the rhetoric of human rights seriously."

A less biased analyst would turn this around: If the performance contradicts the rhetoric, in Kosovo as well as in Turkey and East Timor, this suggests that the rhetoric of human rights should not be taken seriously. Rather, it should be viewed as a cover for policies with other primary ends, and certainly not "central" to policy-making. ■

Edward S. Herman's most recent book, co-edited with Philip Hammond, is *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis (Pluto)*.

A Humanitarian Crusade

By Diana Johnstone

Paul Hockenos sets out to direct readers toward books sympathetic to NATO's "humanitarian intervention" and to warn them away from the only one mentioned that is severely critical: the collection of essays edited by Tariq Ali, published by Verso, entitled *Masters of the Universe?* Of these essays, he singles out my own as "one of the crassest" of its "many heavy-handed tracts." Other authors of these "heavy-handed tracts" include Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, David Chandler, Regis Debray, Oskar Lafontaine, Susan Woodward, Edward Said, Robin Blackburn, Ellen Meiksins Wood, John Gittings and Harold Pinter. All are dismissed by Hockenos as a "small group ... profoundly suspicious of Western, above all U.S., intentions in the Balkans," who contribute "a number of like-minded, often repetitive arguments against 'NATO's Balkan crusade.'"

Of course, the mainstream columnists and editorialists who served up "like-minded, often repetitive arguments," accepting without suspicion NATO's proclaimed humanitarian motives, were a large, not a small group. It is customary for the majority to rally around the flag during military forays into distant countries. But later on, historians have frequently concluded that small, suspicious groups who dissented were closer to the truth.

Hockenos' review of *Masters of the Universe?* has two basic problems. The first has to do with the fundamental issue of NATO's motives and purposes for going to war in the Balkans. Hockenos believes in "the emerging morality governing the use of force for humanitarian purposes." He will accept criticisms that aim to improve and refine this new humanitarian use of force, but he stigmatizes as "conspiracy theorists" critics who reject this new NATO mission altogether as hypocritical or inappropriate. Second, by wrapping his review of contemporary works in long citations from Ivo Andric, Hockenos implicitly lays claim to greater appreciation of historical complexity than the Verso authors, characterized as "once-sharp social critics ... unable to develop and refine their critique as historical events have altered its context."

The implication seems to be that the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the rise of nationalist conflicts has produced an "altered context" in which it is no longer appropriate to regard the international conduct of the United States and its NATO allies with the same sort

of "suspicion" that has proved quite justified in all of past human history when analyzing the reasons behind aggressive use of military force by the Great Powers.

In reality, both the altered historical context and the complexity of the Yugoslav situation are obvious to everyone. However, Hockenos' views have the benefit of gaining instant credibility from being largely in harmony with the prevailing mainstream interpretation. Dissenters have the disadvantage of going contrary to what most readers think they already know from the media, such as "Serbian genocide of Albanians in Kosovo." The dissenting view is by no means more simple, crass or heavy-handed. But distorted as such, it can be dismissed. And rather than counter my arguments, Hockenos states: "To Johnstone, the 'obvious, short three-letter explanation' for the Kosovo intervention is oil: 'All roads lead to the Caspian, and through Kosovo.'"



TIM OCKENDEW/REUTERS POOL

Here, he distorts my argument, the better to dismiss it without discussion. A few words have been pulled out of their context—a fairly complex analysis of the writings of Robert D. Kaplan and others on "the cultural divide" cutting through the Balkans between Western Catholic and Protestant Europe, Eastern Orthodox Europe and the Muslim world. I wrote:

An oddity of these "cultural divide" projections is that they find the abyss between Eastern and Western Christianity far deeper and more unbridgeable than the difference between Christianity and Islam. The obvious short, three-letter explanation is "oil." But there is a complementary explanation that is more truly cultural, relating to the transnational nature of Islam and to the importance of its charitable organizations. Steve Niva [in *Middle East Report*] has noted a split within the U.S. foreign policy establishment between conservatives (clearly absent from the Clinton administration) who see Islam as a threat, and "neo-liberals" for whom the primary enemy is "any barrier to free trade and unfettered markets." These include European leaders, oil companies and Zbigniew Brzezinski. "Incorporating Islamists into existing political systems would disperse responsibility for the state's difficulties while defusing popular opposition to severe economic 'reforms' mandated by the IMF. Islamist organizations could also help fill the gap caused by the rollback of welfare states and social services," Niva observed.

In any case, all roads lead to the Caspian, and through Kosovo. Kaplan publicly advises the nation's leaders that an "amoral reason of self-interest" is needed to persuade the country to keep troops in the Balkans for years to come. The reason is clear. "With the Middle East increasingly fragile, we will need bases and fly-over rights in the Balkans to protect Caspian Sea oil."

Hockenos is perhaps a sloppy reader of arguments he dislikes. A more attentive reader than he can see that my statement about oil was a hypothesis to explain U.S. relations with Muslim states, and that it was Kaplan, a strong advocate of the NATO operation, who actually presented oil as a reason for establishing military bases in the Balkans.

I never said nor imagined that the Kosovo intervention could be satisfactorily explained by something so simple as "oil." Discerning the motives of an individual can already be tricky, and discerning the motives of a government or alliance, where different interests merge and conflict, and where crucial decisions are taken outside public view, is even more difficult. But since throughout history aggressive military actions have almost always been cloaked in proclamations of high moral purpose, there is no particular reason to take seriously NATO declarations of "humanitarian" warriors. On the other hand, there are good reasons not to believe them, such as NATO's failure to apply such standards consistently (e.g., ongoing support to key NATO ally Turkey's repression of Kurdish rebels). Another is that many of the official declarations of NATO spokesmen during the bombing were manifestly untrue. Still another is the actual outcome of the supposedly "humanitarian" action.

At the end of the bombing, it is the Serbs, not the Albanians, who have been massively "ethnically cleansed" out of Kosovo, which has since been transformed into a murderous haven for heroin traffickers,

Aggressive military actions have always been cloaked in proclamations of high moral purpose, so there is no particular reason to take seriously NATO declarations of "humanitarian" warriors.

gun-runners, forced prostitution and various rackets run by erstwhile pro-NATO "freedom fighters." And the United States, without asking permission of anybody, has simply expropriated a huge swath of farmland at a particularly strategic crossroads in southeastern Kosovo and turned it into "Camp Bondsteel," the biggest overseas U.S. military base since Vietnam. To much of the world, these concrete results appear to be a better indicator of the real intentions of the superpower than fine speeches by Bill Clinton and Tony Blair.

For example, the June 9 issue of *Figaro Magazine* reported from Kosovo that Washington's European allies "have the impression of having been taken for a ride: Anticipating tensions with a Europe on the way to unification and the loss of their bases in the EU, the United States may have decided to build itself a new bastion. A well chosen terrain: a Muslim region where European sentiments are inexistent, in the Balkans near the Mediterranean, the Near East, petroleum."



DYLAN MARTINEZ/REUTERS

The French magazine went on to note that the European allies, looking at this gigantic permanent military base on their doorstep, "are beginning to wonder whether its implantation wasn't the real objective of the war."

In distorting and dismissing my reference to "oil," Hockenos also omits the facts that tend to give it pertinence. In the article cited, I wrote:

Looking at a map, one may wonder why it is necessary to go through Kosovo to obtain Caspian oil. This is a good question. However, U.S. strategists don't simply want to obtain oil, which is a simple matter if one has money. They want to control its flow to the big European market. The simple way to get Caspian oil is via pipeline southward through Iran. But that would evade U.S. control. Or through Russia; just as bad. The preferred U.S. route, a pipeline from Azerbaijan to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan has been rejected as too costly. Turkey has vetoed massive oil tanker traffic through the Bosphorus on ecological grounds. That leaves the Balkans. It seems the U.S. would like to build a pipeline across the Balkans.

That was admittedly speculation. However, subsequent developments tend to bear it out. In January, the U.S. government provided over half a million dollars to study construction of an oil pipeline by the New York-based "Albanian-Macedonian-Bulgarian Oil Company" (AMBO) to be built through those three countries. By cutting transport costs, this would make delivery of Caspian oil profitable not only to European markets, but also to the United States.

DIALOGUE: THE BALKANS

Hockenos acknowledges that the Western powers have economic interests. But he defines these interests in very narrow, benevolent terms of "stability," a goal which does not conflict with the proclaimed humanitarian goal. Thus he wrote:

While Western involvement in the Balkans isn't a grand imperialist plot, it is equally naïve to see it solely as an altruistic matter of human rights. Western Europe and the United States have concrete economic and geo-strategic interests in a stable Southeastern European region. Bloody wars on the European periphery create hundreds of thousands of costly refugees, disrupt trade routes, paralyze the economies of weak neighboring states and throw a wrench into the ongoing processes of European integration. There is also little doubt that NATO was eager to prove itself indispensable in the post-Cold War context.

In the obscure mix of motives behind such an action as NATO intervention in the Balkans, some motives—and not those most openly proclaimed—may turn out to be more operative than others. NATO's professed objective of creating a multi-ethnic, humanitarian democracy in Kosovo—no doubt the sincere desire of some of the many lesser supporters in NATO's "humanitarian crusade," especially intellectuals who have mistaken Balkan windmills for Hitlerian dragons—is a resounding

failure. Rather than "stability" the operation has produced many of the effects Hockenos claims it wished to prevent.

For Hockenos, criticism of the new doctrine of "humanitarian intervention" has strict limits. It is all right to want to make it more effective by using ground warfare rather than air strikes, and by following up military intervention with "credible, professional peacekeeping missions that will help indigenous democratic forces create self-sustaining democratic institutions and political cultures." In fact, Hockenos himself, having worked for the OSCE administration of Bosnia at Banja Luka, has been actively engaged in the enterprise of teaching democracy to the local people. This is no doubt an inspiring and rewarding project, but so was the imperial civilizing mission of the 19th century. The Christian missionaries have been replaced by progressive NGOs.

Idealistic or cynical, those embarked on this crusade readily partake of a consensus that fiercely rejects any suggestion that the mission itself might be basically flawed—that freedom and democracy must be developed by the people themselves, not by occupying armies and foreign administrators who know what is best, as dictated by IMF economists. Imbued with their own righteousness, the transnational benefactors indignantly reject the suggestion that the Great Powers and their armies that make their humanitarian work possible might have ulterior motives, and might even be largely responsible for stirring up the conflicts and instability that allow them to intervene in the first place. ■



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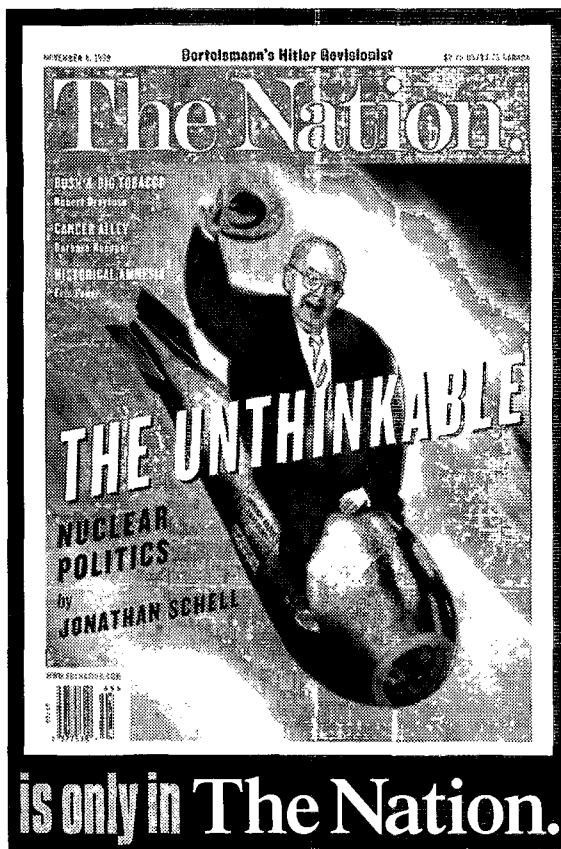
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A Man for All Seasons

By Howard Zinn

It takes some courage to write still another biography of Karl Marx, especially if the writer has dared to go through the 40 volumes of his writings and his correspondence. Francis Wheen seems to have done that research

Karl Marx: A Life
By Francis Wheen
W.W. Norton
431 pages, \$27.95

scrupulously, open to both colorful stories and thunderous ideas.

The time is right for a new appraisal of Marx because ignoramuses and shitheads (the spellcheck on my computer rejected this, suggesting instead "hotheads, catheads, whiteheads, skinheads") on all parts of the ideological spectrum have distorted his ideas in ridiculous ways. Forgive me, but I want to give you the flavor of Marx's personality, which included frequent insults directed at those, whether bourgeois or left intellectuals, who drove him to distraction by disagreeing with him—not, I agree, an admirable trait, but we must be honest about people we otherwise admire.

Marx has been stupidly (there, I've caught the virus of virulence again) linked with Stalin, by both Stalinists and apologists for capitalism. So this is a good time to set the record straight. The reviewer of Wheen's book in the *New York Times Book Review* seemed to think that the lack of Marxists in departments of economics, history and philosophy is somehow proof of the inadequacy of Marx's theories and, absurdly, wonders "why the rest of us should bother with Marx's ideas now that the Berlin Wall has fallen."

Wheen lets you know immediately where he stands on this matter: "Only a fool could hold Marx responsible for the Gulag; but there is, alas, a ready supply of fools." Marx "would have been appalled by the crimes committed in his name." He has been "calamitously misinterpreted." And the misinterpretation has been bipartisan, as "all these bloody blemishes on the history of the 20th century were justified in the name of Marxism or anti-Marxism."

This is a worthy enterprise, to distinguish Marx himself from the actions of the so-called Marxists (who led an exasperated Marx at one time to say: "I am

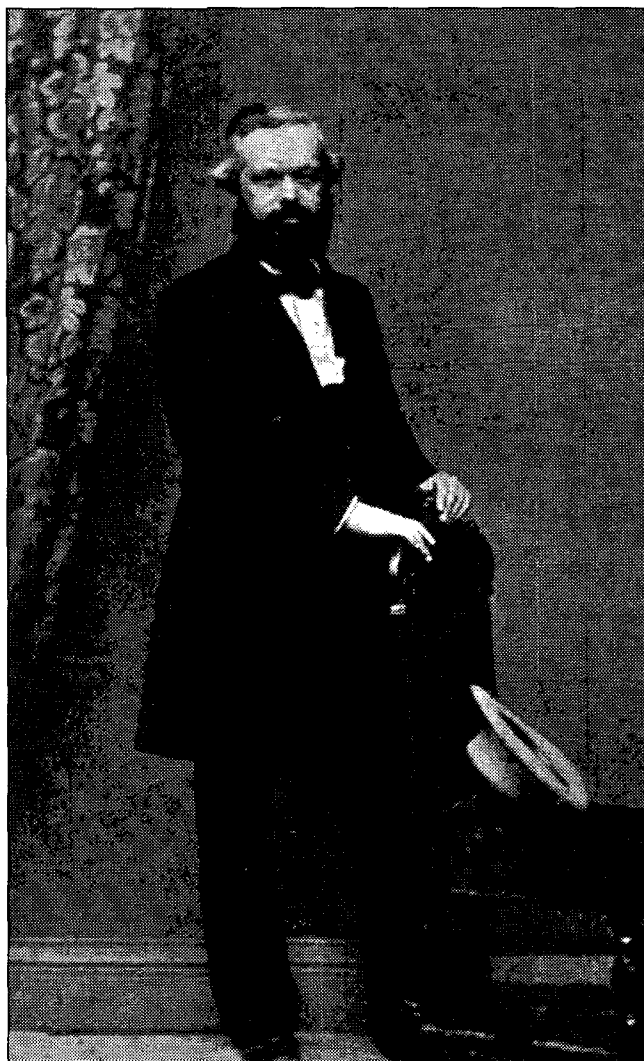
not a Marxist"), as well as to keep alive his still-accurate critique of capitalism.

Wheen provides a colorful romp through Marx's life. Marx grew up in a middle-class German family, with rabbi ancestors on both sides, but his father converted to Christianity for practical reasons. (Karl in fact was baptized at the age of six.) At 18 he was engaged to the beautiful Jenny von Westphalen, whose aristocratic family admired the young Karl for his remarkable intellect, and whose father took long walks with him, reciting Homer and Shakespeare.

Marx studied first at the University of Bonn and then the University of Berlin, as a rather wild and fun-loving student even while seriously pursuing the teachings of Hegel and writing a doctoral dissertation on Greek philosophy. His thesis, comparing the ideas of Democritus and Epicurus, is a ringing declaration of freedom from false authority, insisting that the true purpose of philosophy was to deny "all gods of heaven and earth who do not recognize man's self-consciousness was the highest divinity."

Hegel also saw the historical development of man's self-consciousness as the human march toward freedom. But Marx was soon to go beyond that, to turn Hegel "on his head," to see freedom as requiring, not simply a change in consciousness, but a revolutionary change in the material conditions of life. Early on, Marx's extraordinary intellectual power was evident. His friend Moses Hess said that Marx "combines the deepest philosophical seriousness with the most biting wit. Imagine Rousseau, Voltaire, Holbach, Lessing, Heine and Hegel fused into one man, and you have Dr. Marx."

Marx was 24 when he moved to Cologne, as editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*. He soon began challenging the sacred laws of private property, denouncing the arrest of peasants who were using firewood from private forests, and writing editorials against the Prussian censors. What can be more infuriating to censors than



"I am not a Marxist." But he was a capital family man.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL HISTORY

to rail against censorship? They castigated the *Zeitung* for "impudent and disrespectful criticism of the existing government institutions." And proved it right by shutting it down.

Wheen enjoys showing the inanity of Marx's detractors, as when they reduce his complex view of religion to unconditional hostility, quoting repeatedly his statement that religion is "the opium of the people." The full quotation, from his 1843 essay, "Toward a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," shows a more nuanced and sympathetic understanding of the social role of religion: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, the soul of soulless conditions, it is the opium of the people."

Driven from Germany, Marx went to Paris, where he and Jenny found a little flat on the Left Bank, and where their first child, Jennichen, was born in 1844. It was in the cafés of Paris that Marx met an extraordinary group of other young radicals: Proudhon ("property is theft"); Heine, the brilliant poet; Bakunin, the wild man of anarchism and spontaneous revolution; Stirner, the supreme individualist; and, most important of all, Frederick Engels.

Engels was two years younger than Marx, but already more aware of class oppression and class struggle, having witnessed a general strike in Manchester, England, where his father owned textile mills. In 1845, at 25, Engels would write eloquently and powerfully of working-class lives in his book *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. He described one Manchester slum as follows: "Masses of refuse, offal and sickening filth lie among standing pools in all directions; the atmosphere is poisoned by the effluvia from these, and laden and darkened by the smoke of a dozen tall factory chimneys. A horde of ragged women and children swarm about here."

Marx and Engels, meeting for the first time in August of 1844 in the Café de la Regence (Voltaire, Diderot and Benjamin Franklin were among its famous patrons), hit it off from the start, intellectually and personally. Engels then visited Marx's flat, and there followed 10 days of intense and wide-ranging discussion, which Wheen, seeing this as the beginning of an extra-

ordinary relationship, with immense historical significance, calls "ten days that shook the world."

It was in Paris, at the age of 26, that Marx wrote his famous "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," which remained unpublished until the 1930s, but which contain some of his most profound ideas. The central concept was alienation, but Marx saw the source of this alienation not as a problem of consciousness, as Hegel put it, but in the material conditions of capitalist society. Under capitalism, human beings led a nonhuman existence, being alienated from their work, from the product of

**To his daughter
Eleanor, Marx was
"the cheeriest, gayest
soul that ever
breathed, a man
brimming over with
humor."**

their labor, from one another, from nature, from their own true selves. The solution was not in the realm of ideas, but in action to overturn these conditions.

Driven from Paris, Marx met Engels again in Brussels, and, commissioned by the Communist League of London, they (mostly Marx, it seems) fashioned one of the most influential documents of modern history, *The Communist Manifesto*. It appeared in French just before the 1848 revolution. The first English edition, in 1850, started with the sentence: "A frightful hobgoblin stalks through Europe." In the 1888 translation that became: "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism."

The Manifesto demolished the idea that capitalism was a natural and eternal condition. It was a stage in history, which came out of feudalism and would give way to a more humane society. Capitalism brought about an enormous development in technology and production: "The bourgeoisie has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together." But workers were now nothing more than commodities, their

lives subject to the domination of the market. And as capitalism becomes more and more obviously inadequate to control its own enormous growth, the working class will become the instrument for its replacement.

As workers become "a ruling class," representing the vast majority of the nation, they will sweep away the conditions for the existence of all classes, "and will therefore have abolished its own supremacy as a class." The climactic sentence of the first part of the *Manifesto* is profoundly important, repudiating any notion of a police state, and insisting on the ultimate goal of individual freedom: "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

Expelled from the continent and finding refuge finally in London, Marx labored for years in the library of the British Museum on his epic work, *Capital*. All this, while living with Jenny in the miserable conditions of Soho, and grieving as three of their children, two boys and a girl, died in the first years of life. Two girls, their first-born Jennichen and Laura, had survived, and a third, Eleanor, was born in London. (Eleanor was a remarkable child, politically precocious at the age of 8; Yvonne Kapp's two-volume biography of Eleanor Marx is a wonderful description of the life of the Marx family in London.)

Wheen is unsparing in his depiction of Marx's nastiness, directed against Ferdinand Lassalle (including anti-Semitic barbs, although anti-Semitism was not part of Marx's philosophy or political behavior), Proudhon and other intellectuals of the left. He was unmoved by Proudhon's plea that they should not become "the leaders of a new intolerance" and responded caustically to Proudhon's *The Philosophy of Poverty* with his own diatribe, *The Poverty of Philosophy*. He referred to another refugee from the 1848 revolution in Germany, one August Willich, as "an uneducated, four times-cuckolded jack-ass." Willich challenged him to a duel, which he wisely declined.

Yet Wheen also recognizes that Marx was a loving husband and deeply affec-

tionate father who, despite being unable to pay bills and depending on Engels for financial support, bought a piano for his daughters and sent them to the seashore to get them away from the rancid air of Soho. He read Dante, Shakespeare and Cervantes to Eleanor, whose love and devotion to him were expressed throughout her life. His enemies may have seen him differently, but her father, Eleanor said, was "the cheeriest, gayest soul that ever breathed, a man brimming over with humor."

It is to Wheen's credit that, despite his sometimes obsessive attention to the comic elements in Marx's life, he treats the man's ideas with great respect. He doesn't insist that Marx's analysis in *Capital* is flawless, but sees it as "a work of the imagination," its purpose "an ironic one, juxtaposed with grim, well-documented portraits of the misery and filth which capitalist laws create in practice."

He points out how Marx predicted the world of today, with ever increasing con-

centrations of wealth in fewer and fewer hands, with capitalism roaming the globe in search of profits, with a deepening contradiction between the colossal growth of production and the failure to distribute its fruits justly. Wheen says that "the more I studied Marx, the more astoundingly topical he seemed to be."

Those who would doubt Marx's commitment to a truly democratic society should study his eloquent (second in literary brilliance only to his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*) description of the 1871 Paris Commune. The Commune abolished rents and debts, equalized wages, hailed culture and education, made leaders subject to immediate recall by the people, destroyed the guillotine. Women played a crucial role in all of its activities (see Gay Gullickson, *The Unruly Women of Paris*). It was, Marx said, "the most glorious achievement of our time." ■

Howard Zinn is the author of *A People's History of the United States*.

this book shows, its possibilities and permutations remain ever renewable.

Elsewhere, McMurtry has written that his work in fiction can be understood as an attempt to take the Great Plains to which his grandparents came as white pioneers and fill them with characters whose stories would give the region the heft of an actual culture. What makes *Roads* anomalous, therefore, is its absence of characters. There is only one: Larry McMurtry. "The development of credit-card gas pumps, microwaves, and express motels has eliminated the necessity for human contact along the interstates," he observes. "It is now possible to drive coast to coast without speaking to a human being at all."

And indeed he proves it, recounting but three or four human exchanges along several thousand miles he drove over nine months last year. So this is not a work of journalism. Nor is it a test of endurance or an exploration of uncharted lands, in the manner of so much great travel literature. Nor is it, he disclaims, an attempt at "broadened cultural awareness"; he drives "not equipped with a Zagat and *not even stopping for museums*." (How could he breeze by the National Four-String Banjo Hall of Fame in Guthrie, Oklahoma, without stopping? We'll never know.)

What we do have here is a peculiar little book at the intersection of geography, history, bibliophilia and one man's mind meditating at high speeds. (McMurtry sticks almost solely to the interstates.) Consider this rumination on an Arizona town where McMurtry sleeps one night:

Timothy McVeigh hung out near Kingman for awhile, nursing his grievances against the government and learning to make bombs. Wovoka, the Paiute prophet who sponsored and preached the Ghost Dance, didn't die until 1932, a fact I mention because one of the last Ghost Dance uprisings occurred near Kingman. The Ghost Dance, a harmless form of Native American millenarianism, made the white authorities so nervous that they always overreacted in their efforts to suppress it, most notably at Wounded Knee, less famously at Kingman. The town of Kingman itself is just a stop on the road—a rather harsh stop. In the hills around it are plenty of

Interstate Rambler

By Philip Connors

We are a wheeled people; it seems to me sometimes that I must have been born with a steering wheel in my hands.

—Wallace Stegner

What in our collective imagination remains as American as driving? Certainly not baseball, with its transient mercenaries and wild-card playoffs, nor apple pie, which instead of cooling on the countertop is now deep frozen in the supermarket, shipped from some industrial bakery in Terre Haute or Tuscaloosa. Nor even,

or the high-speed desert crossings of Joan Didion's *Play It As It Lays*. Don DeLillo drove in his first novel, *Americana*, in which David Bell drops out and roars West "in a low cloud of crematory smoke," thinking: "There is nothing more thrilling than the first days of a long journey on wheels into the slaving mouth of an incredible and restless country." Even Vladimir Nabokov, an expat whose third language was English, conjured a double Humbert who left America's highways "defiled with a sinuous trail of slime."

None of this is meant to suggest that Larry McMurtry's new travelogue, *Roads*, is in a class with the best of the nomad novels. McMurtry, in fact, has already written his, *Lonesome Dove*, in which the men—and I mean men—drove not convertible Mustangs but herds of cattle from atop the saddles of horses, from Mexico to Montana. I mean only to point out that, at least as far back as Huck Finn's great Mississippi River interstate, American writers have been obsessed with the road and that, as

Roads: Driving Across America's Great Highways
By Larry McMurtry
Simon & Schuster
208 pages, \$25

one suspects, Mom, who messed up the mythology when she dared to work outside the home.

Consult the fevered wanderings of our national literature: Sal and Dean's jaunty joyrides in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*

holing-up places, ideal for the resentful and disaffected soldiers, as McVeigh was, of many strange gods.

While you're chewing over such spooky juxtapositions, McMurtry is busy remarking on the mossy trunks of various old-growth literary giants as he cruises through their neck of the woods. (This is a man who, in a second career as an antiquarian bookseller, owns at least 300,000 books—not counting all he has sold in 25 years.) So we get the Dead White Males: Faulkner in Mississippi, Hemingway in Key West and upper Michigan. But his tastes are eclectic and his pantheon inclusive: In Michigan he also makes a case for Janet Lewis; he calls Flannery O'Connor "the silver poet" to Faulkner's "Homer, the epic singer"; in the Southwest there's Leslie Marmon Silko, in Idaho the forgotten Clancy Sigal, and elsewhere Henry Adams, Nelson Algren, Annie Proulx, William Least Heat-Moon and Janet Flanner—from Indianapolis!

(He's wrong or forgetful or both about Minnesota, though, which he judges to have produced, in the way of decent literature, "not a whole lot. Scott Fitzgerald, though a native son, spent most of his life east of Princeton or west of Pasadena. His work seems to owe little or nothing to the Midwest." Perhaps, but let us not forget to praise our not-so-famous small-town chronicler Sinclair Lewis.)

Though McMurtry doesn't take pulses one by one, he does place his novelist's stethoscope to the great humped back of the country as he roars along its aortas. What he senses is a little capitalist cholesterol buildup, a little anxiousness and shortness of breath. Here he is at the airport during a flight delay: "It was clear from their desperate behavior that (those waiting) had already assigned themselves the status of stateless refugees." On the ubiquitous televisions, CNN is broadcasting footage out of Kosovo: "It was impossible not to compare the two groups: those Americans who were certainly going to get home, though a little late, and the Kosovars who no



What we have here is a peculiar little book at the intersection of geography, history, bibliophilia and one man's mind meditating at high speeds.

longer had homes. ... They looked alert and resilient, prepared, since they had no choice, to accept a state of war; but the Americans, who also had no choice, were not at all prepared to accept a little travel delay."

There is plenty of wit, too ("A few minutes later I pass through Why, one of the most appropriately named communities in North America"), not to mention pelicans riding thermals in the slow lane, swivel chairs left spinning in the middle of the road, and a message painted on the side of a building near the little town of Sheyenne, North Dakota: "Nothing was ever lost through

enduring love of North Dakota." Also, accident markers in the ditches and a couple of traffic jams and great swaths of suburban sprawl, just to remind us of the nightmare version of the American dream of escape by automobile: "This was the secretariat, the ant people, inching their way in from the well-managed colonies in Falls Church, Vienna, or Fairfax to keep the government going. These commuters were obviously seasoned ants, neither surprised nor particularly dismayed by the delay they were experiencing—after all, being at work in one of the great gray buildings where America gets administered is probably not much more exciting or even particularly different from being on a freeway in a parked car."

I must quibble on a couple of points. McMurtry seems blissfully unconscious of his own privilege, which allows him to drive expensive rental cars and buy short-notice airplane tickets to suit his traveler's whims. And a hint of unreconstructed masculinity creeps in when he begins to compare driving to women. ("One simply can't fall in love with, sleep with, or marry all the nice women. ... As it is with women, so it is with roads. There are too many nice ones.") But these are tolerable from a traveling companion as literate, lucid and wise as McMurtry. The man has been at his craft for a long time, and only the Updikes and the Oateses of

the world can match his output (23 novels, more than 30 screenplays, a biography and three books of essays).

For these most obsessive of writers, the act of writing is, I think, another form of travel—one better, perhaps, because it is an attempt to thwart our human incapacity to exist in two places at once, to travel without moving. There is only one endeavor quite like it in this way, and that is reading. Finally, the old critic's cliché is apropos. This book moved me. ■

Philip Connors is an editor on the Leisure & Arts page of the Wall Street Journal.

England's Dreaming

By John Ghazvinian

In England, when a fast-talking salesman tries to turn a quick shilling by peddling an item of dubious merit onto an unsuspecting public, he is

In Search of England: Journeys into the English Past

By Michael Wood
University of California Press
336 pages, \$24.95

accused of trying to sell "something that fell off the back of a lorry." The origins of the expression seem obvious enough—presumably something to do with quick-witted scavengers with a knack for making personal capital out of someone else's flotsam.

So when William Hague, the leader of the opposition Conservative Party, embarked on an American-style listening tour around Britain last month, talking to voters from the back of a truck, he probably should have known what he was in for. The abrasive national media, of course, made satirical hay of Hague's rather unfortunate choice of vehicle. But the bedraggled Tory leader's week became just a bit worse when Prime Minister Tony Blair stood up in the House of Commons during question time, looked the bald, beady Welshman squarely in the eye and suggested that "if ever there was a case of dodgy goods falling onto the back of a truck, this is it."

There was, however, a further irony. For years, the most common method of entry into Britain by illegal immigrants has been to jump onto the back of commercial big-rigs delivering goods from the Continent. It used to be the case that

sympathetic lorry-drivers making the channel crossing from France would look the other way as destitute families clambered into their cargo holds at night. Then came the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, with stricter searches and the threat of a £2,000 fine for drivers caught harboring the extra cargo. And, everyone assumed, that would be the end of it—no more dodgy immigrants falling off the backs of lorries.

But for most of this year—until they were embarrassed last June into a sheepish silence by the tragic and high-profile suffocation of 58 Chinese migrants in



Are King Arthur and his posse still relevant in Cool Britannia?

the back of a produce truck on a hot day in Calais—the British tabloids had again taken it upon themselves to impress into the hearts and minds of middle England the notion that there is an urgent problem with Britain's immigration policy. Somehow the country has become a "soft touch" for asylum-seekers, letting in a "flood" of "bogus applicants" who "abuse the welfare

rolls" and engage in "aggressive begging" in city centers across Britain. Never mind that Britain ranks only eighth in Europe in the number of refugees it accepts; it is an ugly fact that the idea of Fortress Britain staggers on, oblivious to the realities of the 21st century and her complicity in its miseries. Hague and the *Daily Mail* still trot out, in one watered-down form or another, the Victorian fictions of a breed apart, hoping to lend a sort of ersatz historical "explanation" to the fact that English people just don't like foreigners.

As Michael Wood reminds us in his book, *In Search of England: Journeys into the English Past*, 1997 was a big year for England. As Hong Kong was handed back to China, a new prime minister swept into power promising almost complete autonomy to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as an end to the House of Lords as we know it. England has had to seriously re-evaluate its collective understanding of the past. John Major's warm-beer-and-cricket vision of England already seems as quaintly distant as wartime rationing, but the myths and fictions about English history and English identity are still very real to the emasculated carapace that 50 years of post-imperial decline has left behind. And it is these myths, and their connection to historical reality, that Wood sets out to explore.

Wood's particular interest is the late Anglo-Saxon period and the early Middle Ages. And England's past, as we are reminded from the get-go, is more multicultural than some might like to think. Indeed, there was no such thing as an "England" until successive waves of Britons, Celts, Angles, Saxons, Danes and Vikings—each exercising power over a different part of the island—were united under the rule of the kings of Wessex in the 10th century.

ry, only to be conquered themselves by a band of Vikings living in the north of France in 1066—the Normans.

Wood is not interested in making a political point about asylum-seekers—or anything else—but does explore the darker corners of what might be called England's historical imagination. The first part of the book highlights the complexities and contingencies of the country's early Medieval past—the what-ifs and the almost-was'n'ts of a murky and unstable time in the history of the North Atlantic Archipelago.

In his fascinating first chapter, Wood explores the theory of the "Norman Yoke," the idea that a freeborn, freedom-loving race of affable Anglo-Saxons had been quashed at Hastings by an illegitimate and repressive (and French-speaking) Norman regime, and that the nation's soul has been seeking a sort of atavistic retribution ever since. The communistic Diggers of the English Civil War, whose leader, Gerrard Winstanley, denounced the executed Charles I as "the last successor of William the Conqueror," came out looking like real English heroes. And of course, there was Robin Hood and his band of merry men living in Sherwood Forest, taking from the rich and giving to the poor—and all the while sticking it to the Sheriff of Nottingham, who would almost certainly have been part of the French-speaking Norman ruling class of the 13th century.

It is Wood's argument that, although the whiggish idea of a grand continuity throughout history went definitively out of vogue in the '70s, we should not discount "the tenacious persistence of oral traditions," and that nations, like children, can be "wounded or inspired by incidents in their birth and early life, reshaping and encoding them as myths which are handed down to serve as warnings or exemplars in later life."

This an excellent and engaging way to set up a book of this kind, and the first few chapters give the reader a great deal to look forward to. It seems a shame, then, that the second part of Wood's book, "Manuscripts and Mysteries," descends into a degree of triviality that often seems hard to justify. Wood is a television presenter, well known to viewers of both PBS and the

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BBC for his 1997 series *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great*, but in a former life he was a graduate student whose research specialty was Anglo-Saxon history of the 9th and 10th centuries. These two forces—showman and scholar—seem to tug at him throughout this part of the book. He tries to unravel the mysteries of English identity by comparing one manuscript to another and reading between the lines of survey maps. One can almost hear him saying, à la Monty Python, "When we come back, we'll be looking at yet another manuscript of William of Malmesbury, this time a 16th-century version, to see if we can uncover any clues about the lost life of King Athelstan. Stay tuned."

Having said that, there is much to redeem *In Search of England*. An example is the spirited and surprisingly gripping chapter on "the last bowl-turner in England," a man in Berkshire who, until he died in 1957, was not only making traditional pottery using the methods of his 19th-century great-grandfather, as archivists have found, but whose workshed was dug into the ground in the exact spot where it appears pottery had been made since Anglo-Saxon times.

Furthermore, interlarded throughout the book are some remarkable insights about the relationship between history and identity. The English, as Wood points out, unlike the Greeks or the Celts, have never had a proper mythology—there is no English mythology section in the bookstore. Partly this is to do with the fact that

they are a very mixed and very recent "race," if we can call them that. In the absence of an indigenous mythology, they have had to invent myths about their national identity, based on a shared historical imagination.

Certainly Wood has a knack for coming up with some rather surprising connections between Anglo-Saxon and modern times. He recounts the campaign for shorter working days in the 19th century, which claimed King Alfred as a hero because he was known to have divided his day into three eight-hour periods—work, sleep and prayer. And the 10th-century kings Edgar and Athelstan, although they centralized English coinage and allowed only the king's name on coins, also permitted regional designs to appease regional sentiment—a very modern practice when one thinks not only of the new Euro, but also of the new U.S. quarters.

But in the end, Wood's stated goal of using history to shed light on the contemporary anxiety about the place of England is not really met. By producing a book whose main appeal consists of some interesting tidbits and nuggets of elided history, Wood only succeeds in confirming the postmodern suspicion that history no longer really matters. To be fair, he sets himself a difficult task—trying to show the relevance of medieval history to contemporary questions. But then he makes that task even more difficult for himself by delivering a collation of charming, fusty little vignettes with no real driving point.

In many ways, *In Search of England* is the printed companion to what Julian Barnes and others have called the "heritage theme park" of modern England—a sort of Baedeker for a fragmented nationalism. Certainly Wood's timing is good, in the sense that the future of "England" is more unclear than ever. But there is a sense that Wood uses his auspicious timing as an excuse to talk about something whose relevance is never as obvious as he thinks it is. Without a really well articulated sense of purpose, this generally entertaining book comes perilously close to looking like something that fell off the back of a lorry. ■

John Ghazvinian is a graduate student in history at Oxford University.

Under the Influence

By Jason Sholl

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, / dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix." So begins Allen Ginsberg's 1956 poem "Howl." But it was never just his generation. Since the dawn of recorded history, creative individuals have sought inspiration through mind-altering substances. In *Writing on*

Writing on Drugs

By Sadie Plant

Farrar, Straus and Giroux
294 pages, \$24

Drugs, Sadie Plant sets out to show how drug users' agile fingers have left their prints all over the Western world.

The first half of *Writing on Drugs* is a literary history. Drug-inspired creativity is one of the writer's most cherished pieces of lore, and much of Plant's material isn't new. Hashish informed Charles Baudelaire's poetry, and mescaline Aldous Huxley's prose. Thomas De Quincey had a fondness for opium, and William Burroughs one for just about anything he could lay his hands on.

But there are also a few surprises. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for example, coined the word "intensify" to describe opium's effects on his thought. His contemporary Robert Southey greatly enjoyed nitrous oxide, and once remarked that "the atmosphere of the highest of all possible heavens must be composed of this Gas." Wilkie Collins, whose novel *The Moonstone* is widely considered the first full-length modern detective story, was dependent on laudanum. Frankfurt School luminaries Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse believed that hashish "fueled the dreams that revolution could bring true." Sigmund Freud once forewarned his wife of the pleasures she could expect from "a wild man with cocaine in his body." Robert Louis Stevenson wrote *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* over the course of a six-day cocaine binge; a century later, Jack Kerouac wrote *On the Road* on a seven-day benzedrine bender. And during World War

II, amphetamines stoked nearly every speech Churchill and Hitler drafted.

In Plant's view, drugs provided these writers with new insights into the working of the mind, newly discovered fragments of the self, and a new awareness of the limits of conventional ideas. Drugs granted them access to the twilight zones between dreamworld and reality, between the conscious and subconscious minds. But even Plant concedes that no writer fully succeeded in translating these insights onto the printed page. Arthur Koestler could have spoken for the bunch when, following a particularly intense acid trip, he declared: "I solved the secret of the universe last night, but this morning I forgot what it was." Soon after, he decided to stick to booze.

At its best, Plant's tour of literary drug use conveys the possibilities and limitations of writing under the influence: "a privileged state in which the most bizarre discontinuities and chimeras could pass through a mind that would regard them all with calm ambivalence." At its worst, Plant's litany of hemp-smoking bohemians and their sometimes deft prose is an overdose. Others' dreams are notoriously boring, and others' drug experiences are no exception.

Thankfully, Plant's ambitions transcend any simple catalog of drug-inspired writings. In the second half of *Writing on Drugs*, she widens the scope of her study from Western literature to all of culture, arguing that even the soberest individual lives in a world profoundly shaped by drugs. Plant claims a decisive role for drugs in, among other things, the origins of Western philosophy, the legend of Santa Claus, and the reason that Persian carpets and paisley fabrics have the patterns that they do.

Riding sleighs, ancient Siberian herders would follow reindeer to the patches of hallucinogenic mushrooms on which they foraged. "When the deer ate the mushrooms," Plant writes, "the herders would drink their urine, consuming the fly agaric's alkaloids after they were processed by the deer."

Getting "pissed" may now be associated with alcohol, but ancient reindeer herders started the trend. Moreover, Plant continues, millions of children revisit these old shamanic routes every year "when Santa Claus, dressed in red and white, flies through the sky in a sleigh drawn by reindeer bearing gifts from another world."

The lattices, the baroquely infolding spirals, and the kaleidoscopic turbulence of modern tie-dye shirts, Plant claims, find echoes in the intricate patterning of Arabian carpets and the paisley fabric of the Indian subcontinent, not to mention certain recurrent motifs in paleolithic cave art. In more than one bedtime story, Arabian carpets have been known to fly, as have the broomsticks of medieval witches whose potions, probably devoid of bat's blood, almost certainly contained herbs and roots whose effects were magical indeed.

Add drugs to the hidden forces that disrupt the smooth operation of industrial capitalism.

Quoting the historian Gordon Wasson, Plant ventures that both ancient theology and modern philosophy were born the night Plato "drunk of the potion in the Temple of Eleusis and [spent] the night seeing the great vision." And after inhaling the hallucinogenic vapors of smoldering herbane, Plant writes, the Oracle at Delphi delivered Oedipus the prophecy that sent him on his tragic way. Some 5,000 years later, Sigmund Freud, himself driven to explain his own reckless cocaine use, seized Oedipus's tale as the basis for one of the 20th century's most influential psychological theories.

Since Freud, psychoanalysis has become a fashionable substitute for drug-fueled explorations of the self, and nearly as expensive and addictive as Freud's drug of choice. Like psychotherapy, Plant contends, modern advertising began as a surrogate for drugs whose use was beginning to be tightly controlled. The Coca-Cola Company was the first big

corporation to invest in mass advertising, "compensating for the loss of an ingredient that had once allowed the drink to sell itself." Throughout the course of *Writing on Drugs*, fashion, language, philosophy and economics all fall under the influence, and it becomes difficult to disagree when Plant writes: "Drugs shape the laws and write the very rules they break."

One of the most radical and fashionable thinkers of her generation, Plant has already written agenda-setting books. Her 1992 debut, *The Most Radical Gesture*, traced the Situationist International's vital but largely hidden role in the development of 20th-century countercultural movements. Her 1997 follow-up, *Zeroes + Ones*, traced the quiet spread of computing into everyday life and chronicled the digital revolution's unique challenges to patriarchal capitalism. *Writing on Drugs*, the first fruit of Plant's post-academic career as a "freelance thinker," adds drugs to the inventory of hidden forces that can re-align consciousness at the individual level—and disrupt the smooth functioning of industrial capitalism at the collective level.

Plant believes that drugs do their most violent work through the economic "black holes" they create. Authorities estimate the traffic in illegal drugs approaches \$500 billion a year, or roughly a 10 percent share of the world's international commodities trade. In comparison, the chemical industry accounts for some 9 percent, as does the combined market in food, live animals, beverages and tobacco. In 1987 it was reported that one in three bills in U.S. circulation had been used in cocaine transactions, and that 94 percent of American paper currency was contaminated with traces of cocaine. Opium still trades as the gold standard of the world's black economies, and, as political journalist Vernon Coleman observed in the '80s, cocaine and heroin "are so light and so easily transportable that they are now preferred to diamonds as an international currency." Most of this activity, by necessity, escapes taxes and avoids commercial and industrial links to the official economy.

It's little wonder the war on drugs has assumed such a global urgency.

Yet in a vicious irony, Plant argues, Western capitalism itself was put together on the back of the illegal drug trade. In the 18th and 19th centuries, all of the great European empires—British, Dutch, French, Spanish and Portuguese—amassed immense fortunes trading opium to the Far East and used the money to fuel their own industrial revolutions. "Trading without regard for either Chinese or British law," Plant writes, "the [British] East India Company was the world's first drug cartel."

The cultivation and traffic of drugs continue to complicate political and military scenarios in Afghanistan, Iran, Colombia and the Balkans, among other places. "As the U.N. finds itself supporting [trades and regimes] to which it is supposedly opposed," she writes, "the war on drugs is once again chasing its own tail. Someone is laughing all the way to a bank he probably already owns."

Plant's own politics are indiscriminately anarchist. She seems willing to celebrate any group—whether drug car-

tels or suburban ravers—whose operations sabotage official channels of power. But Plant is ultimately far too hip to be a revolutionary. More often than not, she treats her material with a cool ambivalence and avoids passing judgment.

On this front, she has much in common with her intellectual forefather, the French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault also believed that drugs needed to be taken on their own terms, "freed from the restrictions we impose upon them, freed from the dilemmas of truth and falsehood." Toward the end of his life, he raised the possibility of writing "a study of the culture of drugs ... in the West from the beginning of the nineteenth century." A book on drugs would have been the perfect complement to his existing portfolio of research of madness, disease, crime and sexuality. While Foucault died before he could begin his research, his project fortunately did not die with him. It survives as the elegant and erudite survey Sadie Plant has written. ■

Jason Sholl, an editorial assistant for *Lingua Franca*, wrote "Day-Glo Bacchanalia" in the August 7 issue.



A poster for *Fresh Dialogue*, an event held by the New York chapter of the American Institute of Graphic Arts. The poster was designed by the artists Nicholas Blechman, Christoph Niemann and Paul Sahre. Copy in the lower left corner of the poster reads: "Deserted Kosovar refugee camp, Macedonia. Call 1 (800) HELP-NOW." "The three of us felt strongly that the work we do is in context with what's going on in the world," Sahre says. The poster was an opportunity "to touch on this and to raise money and awareness for the refugees in Kosovo." From *Fresh Dialogue: New Voices in Graphic Design*, published by Princeton Architectural Press.

Vanishing Act

By Joshua Rothkopf

To Paul Verhoeven's loyal audience of dirty-minded adolescent boys and closet fascists you may now add postmodernist critics. In recognition of a distinguished career showcasing nude ice-picking (*Basic Instinct*), corporate-sponsored brutality

Hollow Man

Directed by Paul Verhoeven

(*RoboCop*) and jiggling lesbian chic (*Showgirls*), *ArtForum* has pronounced Verhoeven a secret satirist. Leave it to them to find the urinal in the gallery and sniff a "mass-market auteur" unappreciated by popular-press "dumbness."

Trash has its own standards, however, and Verhoeven's new feature, *Hollow Man*, falls considerably short of them. The movie takes a durable subgenre, the invisible man picture, and strips it down to its most puerile hypothesis. Whereas past protagonists of such movies used their invisibility to rehabilitate deflated egos, to overcome their weaknesses, Verhoeven's uses his to ogle perfectly rounded breasts. We're clearly beyond comic book fantasy here, moving on to those back-page ads for x-ray glasses and see-through underwear.

As in his previous release, the pun-gently foul masterpiece *Starship Troopers*, Verhoeven has assembled an extremely pretty cast for contrived doom. They're supposed to be government scientists working on a supersecret defense project involving invisible armies. When these hot nerds aren't petulantly slapping keys on laptops or peeking out from under tousled hairdos, they engage in aerobic foreplay and dine at elegant restaurants overlooking the Capitol. (In *These Times* readers will be amused to learn that

Verhoeven secured rare permission to shoot at the Pentagon; it's good to know our boys in charge are busy handling the tough decisions.) The project's leader, Sebastian Caine, played by Kevin Bacon in what may be a sly joke on his own bland ubiquity, is a blow-dried blowhard who speeds down the Beltway in a silver convertible and calls himself "a goddamn genius" in all earnestness.

It quickly becomes apparent that Caine is less an evil genius than a plain jerk, the kind of guy who watches his neighbor undress and sends a healthy gorilla test subject to its death. Worse, he gives frequent and free expression to

serial pervert. Groping his nubile colleagues, terrorizing little kids, teasing the homeless, raping women in bathrobes—so goes the nightlife of an invisible man. After a while, you forget about Caine—even when he's onscreen—and start thinking about the man behind the camera, who appears to be living out a personal fantasy.

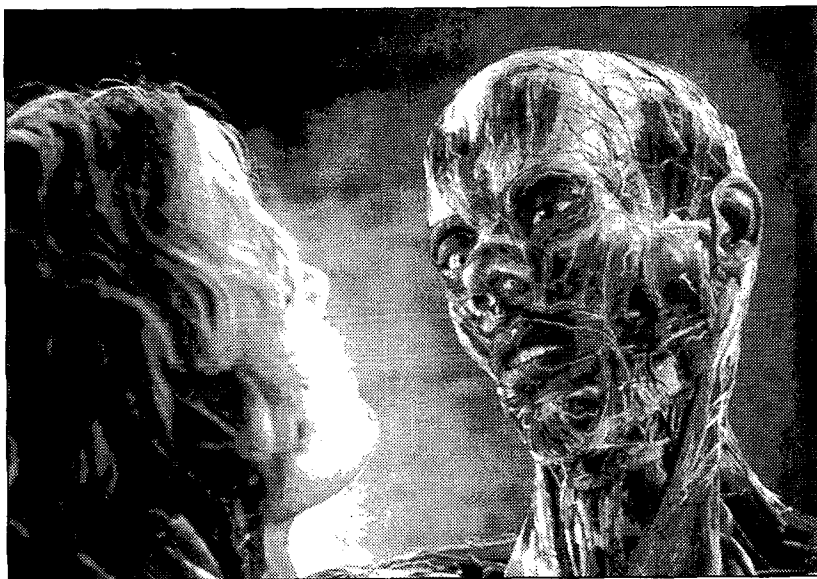
Doing battle with the evil male gaze is Elizabeth Shue, as Caine's assistant and ex-lover. Her brave performance in *Leaving Las Vegas* now a faint memory, Shue currently faces a perceptible crisis of recalling forgotten depth; this bitchy role is not the answer. There's no reason for her character to feel the slightest empathy for a monster like Caine, so Shue suffers resignedly through what comes off as an extended nightmare of the bad boyfriend who won't take no for an answer. The screenwriters lock her

and the other scientists in their underground lab with their murderous transparent boss for the usual, *Alien*-inspired corridor chases; after a point, Caine might well just have been a crocodile. (Jerry Goldsmith's stock-shivery score underlines the theft of better movies, including several of his own.)

As ugly as the conception behind *Hollow Man* is, it might have been salvaged with either more paranoia or more cheek. (They're in Washington, for

heaven's sake—couldn't they have found their way into the Oval Office?) Or maybe this should have been a comedy. Instead, Verhoeven keeps things depressingly solemn and unimaginative, leaving the viewer with little to reflect on other than the director's own sexual anxieties.

To those whose appetites are being pandered to by such desperate banality, a warning: You're being mocked by one of your own. This is, after all, a satire of American vulgarity. To everyone else already wise, I suggest disappearing from theaters for a while. ■



Naughty bits of Bacon harsh Elizabeth Shue's mellow.

his God complex. Caine is determined, it turns out, that he will be the first human to be injected with the invisibility serum, and the deed is done after a showy disrobing in front of his blushing female staff. (The resulting transformation is arrestingly cartoonish: a melting anatomy of vanishing skin revealing dark red sinews and tendons, pulsating organs and finally bone, which crumbles eerily into nothingness.)

The big experiment, when it goes awry, turns Caine not into some pop-tragic victim of his own hubris, as one might expect, but into a Verhoevenesque

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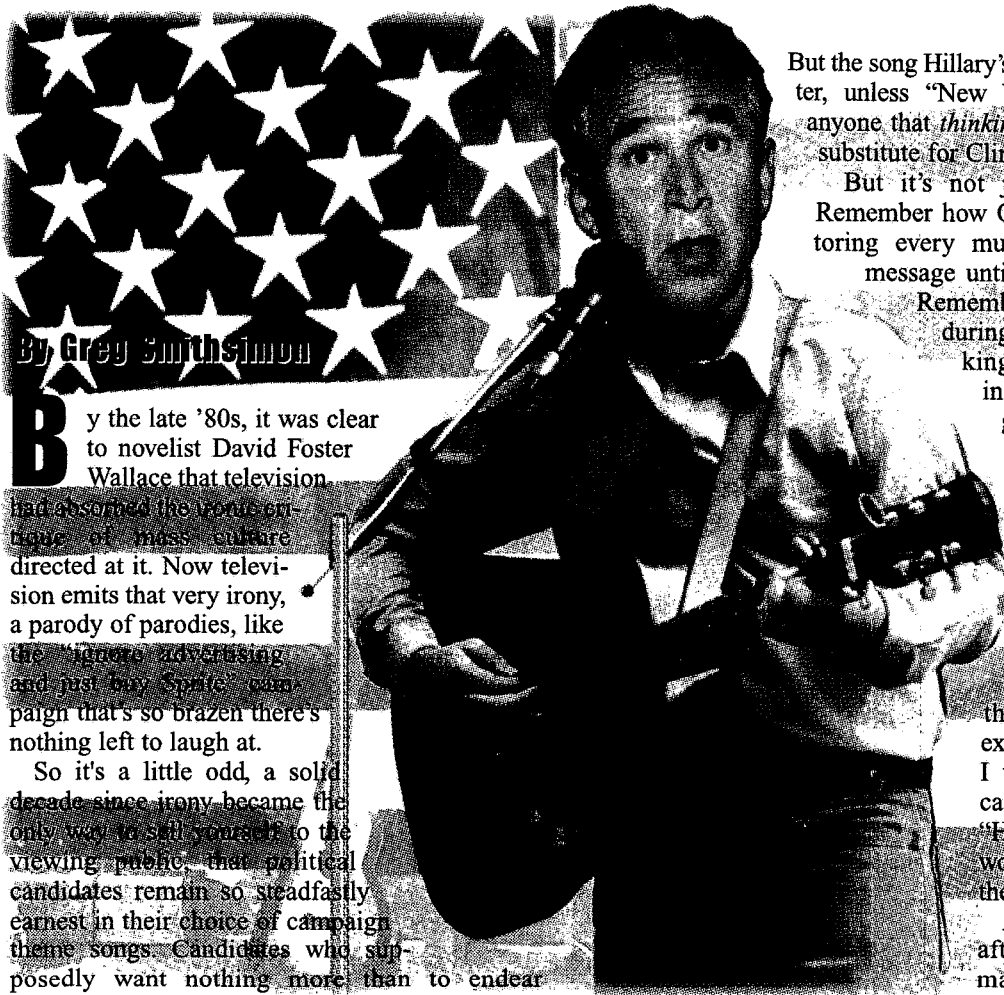
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SYLVIA



By Nicole Hollander

Presidential Dance Parties



By Greg Smithsimon

By the late '80s, it was clear to novelist David Foster Wallace that television had absorbed the ironic critique of mass culture directed at it. Now television emits that very irony, a parody of parodies, like the "ignore advertising and just buy Sprite" campaign that's so brazen there's nothing left to laugh at.

So it's a little odd, a solid decade since irony became the only way to sell product to the viewing public, that political candidates remain so steadfastly earnest in their choice of campaign theme songs. Candidates who supposedly want nothing more than to endear themselves to the American public—a public that ad executives pegged long ago as a deeply cynical lot—insist on believing that what will win them a place in our hearts is a sincere little pop tune.

George Dubya has two: Randy Travis' "I Did My Part"—a title reminiscent of Bob Dole's "I paid my dues, now you have to elect me" attitude—and Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed, Delivered I'm Yours." Where's Elvis' "Return to Sender" when you need it?

Do candidates think this works? One obvious explanation is that politicians are aiming at a much narrower target than TV advertisers are. Perhaps pollsters know that the key swing voter is old enough to remember McFadden and Whitehead, who wrote "Ain't No Stopping Us Now," the lyrical momentum behind Bill Bradley. (If they don't get irony, at least they understand retro. All the candidates have found vintage '70s grooves.)

But candidates can't be trying to impress anybody with their theme songs. The biggest musical hubbub was over a snafu during Hillary Clinton's Senate candidacy announcement, when the CD accidentally spun on to "Captain Jack," who, Billy Joel promised, "will get ya high tonight." The opposition pounced on this as incontrovertible evidence that electing the First Lady would herald the return of bong-wielding hippies and half-naked flower children, while the rest of us just wished it were that easy.

But the song Hillary's team *meant* to play wasn't any better, unless "New York State of Mind" convinced anyone that *thinking about* New York is an adequate substitute for Clinton actually *living* there.

But it's not just Hillary who has bumbled. Remember how Orwellian focus groups are, monitoring every muscle twitch to hone a political message until it tugs on precise heart strings?

Remember your sense of powerlessness during the movie *Wag the Dog*, when the kingmakers craft a sanctimonious, instant patriotic ballad to control us gullible millions? Now think of Al Gore coming on stage to "Love Train." The Democratic heir apparent, with all the media-manipulating strategists money can buy, but with all the smooth moves of the Tin Man, is supposed to mesmerize us by shaking his hips to "Love Train"?

Some inside scoop made me think Ralph Nader would defy expectations and have a jingle. When I was in college, a professor once called Nader a "humorless zealot." "He does a lot of good work, but you wouldn't expect him to be the life of the party," he said.

Another student, back in school after having written for automobile magazines, raised his hand.

"Actually, I've been to social events

with Ralph Nader, and he's funny and lively—he is the life of the party."

The professor didn't miss a beat. "Then I guess he's what you'd call a humorous zealot."

That sounded like the kind of man who could pick a good tune. But I was mistaken. "I don't think that's something Ralph would be into—it's not really his style," a Nader 2000 spokesman told me. Apparently there's no need to dance at his revolution. Oh well, maybe nothing rhymed with humorous zealot. Wait—how about "He's no sellout"?

It's just as well that the smirking, oh-so-postmodern attitude fashionable in advertising today has not been adopted in political campaigns. The problem with irony, as Wallace points out, is that it's "singularly unuseful when it comes to constructing anything to replace the hypocrisies it debunks." Sure, it might make us feel better, but how would it help us come up with better options? In the hands of a critic, irony can be a slingshot. On television it's just plain immobilizing. What we need now is to move—just to something better than "Love Train." ■

Greg Smithsimon is a graduate student at Columbia and a member of the Socialist Review collective. A version of this essay appeared in *Dissent*.